



ALLEGED ASSASSINATION PLOTS INVOLVING FOREIGN LEADERS

AN INTERIM REPORT
OF THE
SELECT COMMITTEE
TO STUDY GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
WITH RESPECT TO
INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES
UNITED STATES SENATE
TOGETHER WITH
ADDITIONAL, SUPPLEMENTAL, AND SEPARATE
VIEWS



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Scheider's impression that there was Presidential authorization for the assassination operation clearly had a powerful influence on the Station Officer's attitude toward undertaking such an assignment.

Hedgman had severe doubts about the wisdom of a policy of assassination in the Congo. At the conclusion of his testimony about the assassination plot, he was asked to give a general characterization of the advisability of the plot and the tenor of the times in which it took place. His response indicated that although he was willing to carry out what he considered a duly authorized order, he was not convinced of the necessity of assassinating Lumumba :

I looked upon the Agency as an executive arm of the Presidency * * *. Therefore, I suppose I thought that it was an order issued in due form from an authorized authority.

On the other hand, I looked at it as a kind of operation that I could do without, that I thought that probably the Agency and the U.S. government could get along without. I didn't regard Lumumba as the kind of person who was going to bring on World War III.

I might have had a somewhat different attitude if I thought that one man could bring on World War III and result in the deaths of millions of people or something, but I didn't see him in that light. I saw him as a danger to the political position of the United States in Africa, but nothing more than that. (Hedgman, 8/21/75, pp. 110-111)

B. CUBA

The facts with respect to Cuba are divided into three broad sections. The first describes the plots against Fidel Castro's life without addressing the question of authorization.

The second deals with whether or not the successive Directors of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles and John McCone, authorized or knew about the various plots. (Although we have separated the evidence relating to the DCI's from that relating to other high administration officials, it is important to remember that the Director of Central Intelligence is the principal advisor to the President on intelligence matters and a member of major administrative policy-making councils, as well as head of the Central Intelligence Agency.)

The third section covers the evidence concerning whether or not other high officials—including the various Presidents—authorized or knew about the plots. This section also considers the evidence relating to whether or not the CIA officials involved believed the plots to be consistent with the general policy objectives of the various administrations even if those officials had no personal knowledge as to whether the plots were or were not specifically authorized by higher authority.

1. THE ASSASSINATION PLOTS

We have found concrete evidence of at least eight plots involving the CIA to assassinate Fidel Castro from 1960 to 1965.¹ Although some of the assassination plots did not advance beyond the stage of planning and preparation, one plot, involving the use of underworld figures, reportedly twice progressed to the point of sending poison pills to Cuba and dispatching teams to commit the deed. Another plot involved furnishing weapons and other assassination devices to a Cuban dissident. The proposed assassination devices ran the gamut from high-powered rifles to poison pills, poison pens, deadly bacterial powders, and other devices which strain the imagination.

¹In August 1975, Fidel Castro gave Senator George McGovern a list of twenty-four alleged attempts to assassinate him in which Castro claimed the CIA had been involved. The Committee forwarded this list to the CIA and requested it to respond to those allegations. The CIA's fourteen-page response concluded:

"In summary, of the * * * incidents described in Castro's report, the files reviewed indicate that CIA had no involvement in fifteen of the cases: i.e., never had any contact with the individuals mentioned or was not in contact with them at the time of the alleged incidents. In the remaining nine cases, CIA had operational relationships with some of the individuals mentioned but not for the purpose of assassination. * * * Of the cases reviewed, nothing has been found to substantiate the charges that CIA directed its agents to assassinate Castro.

The Committee has found no evidence that the CIA was involved in the attempts on Castro's life enumerated in the allegations that Castro gave to Senator McGovern. The CIA's involvement in other plots against Castro and the top figures in his Government are set forth below.

The most ironic of these plots took place on November 22, 1963—the very day that President Kennedy was shot in Dallas—when a CIA official offered a poison pen to a Cuban for use against Castro while at the same time an emissary from President Kennedy was meeting with Castro to explore the possibility of improved relations.

The following narrative sets forth the facts of assassination plots against Castro as established before the Committee by witnesses and documentary evidence. The question of the level and degree of authorization of the plots is considered in the sections that follow.

(a) *Plots: Early 1960*

(i) *Plots to Destroy Castro's Public Image*

Efforts against Castro did not begin with assassination attempts.

From March through August 1960, during the last year of the Eisenhower Administration, the CIA considered plans to undermine Castro's charismatic appeal by sabotaging his speeches. According to the 1967 Report of the CIA's Inspector General, an official in the Technical Services Division (TSD) recalled discussing a scheme to spray Castro's broadcasting studio with a chemical which produced effects similar to LSD, but the scheme was rejected because the chemical was unreliable. During this period, TSD impregnated a box of cigars with a chemical which produced temporary disorientation, hoping to induce Castro to smoke one of the cigars before delivering a speech. The Inspector General also reported a plan to destroy Castro's image as "The Beard" by dusting his shoes with thallium salts, a strong depilatory that would cause his beard to fall out. The depilatory was to be administered during a trip outside Cuba, when it was anticipated Castro would leave his shoes outside the door of his hotel room to be shined. TSD procured the chemical and tested it on animals, but apparently abandoned the scheme because Castro cancelled his trip. (I.G. Report, pp. 10-13)

(ii) *Accident Plot*

The first action against the life of a Cuban leader sponsored by the CIA of which the Committee is aware took place in 1960. A Cuban who had volunteered to assist the CIA in gathering intelligence informed his case officer in Havana that he would probably be in contact with Raul Castro. (Memo to Inspector General, 1/17/75) CIA Headquarters and field stations were requested to inform the Havana Station of any intelligence needs that the Cuban might fulfill. The case officer testified that he and the Cuban contemplated only acquiring intelligence information and that assassination was not proposed by them.¹

The cable from the Havana Station was received at Headquarters on the night of July 20. The duty officer, who was summoned to Headquarters from his home, contacted Tracy Barnes, Deputy to Richard Bissell, CIA's Deputy Director for Plans and the man in charge of

¹ A cable to Headquarters requesting any intelligence needs supports this account.

CIA's covert action directorate. The duty officer also contacted J. C. King, Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division within the Directorate for Plans.¹

Following their instructions, he sent a cable to the Havana Station early in the morning of July 21, stating: "Possible removal top three leaders is receiving serious consideration at HQS." The cable inquired whether the Cuban was sufficiently motivated to risk "arranging an accident" involving Raul Castro and advised that the station could "at discretion contact subject to determine willingness to cooperate and his suggestions on details". Ten thousand dollars was authorized as payment "after successful completion," but no advance payment was permitted because of the possibility that the Cuban was a double agent. According to the case officer, this cable represented "quite a departure from the conventional activities we'd been asked to handle." (Case Officer interview, 8/4/75, p. 2)²

The case officer contacted the Cuban and told him of the proposal. The case officer avoided the word "assassinate" but made it clear that the CIA contemplated an "accident to neutralize this leader's [Raul's] influence." (Case Officer interview, 8/4/75, p. 2) After being assured that his sons would be given a college education in the event of his death, the Cuban agreed to take a "calculated risk," limited to possibilities that might pass as accidental. (Cable, Havana to Director, 7/22/60)

Immediately after returning to the station the case officer was told that a cable had just arrived stating: "Do not pursue ref. Would like to drop matter." (Cable, Director to Havana, 7/22/60; Memo to I. G., 1/17/75) This cable was signed by Tracy Barnes.

It was, of course, too late to "drop the matter" since the Cuban had already left to contact Raul Castro. When the Cuban returned, he told the case officer that he had not had an opportunity to arrange an accident.

(iii) *Poison Cigars*

A notation in the records of the Operations Division, CIA's Office of Medical Services, indicates that on August 16, 1960, an official was given a box of Castro's favorite cigars with instructions to treat them with lethal poison. (I. G. Report, p. 21) The cigars were contaminated with a botulinum toxin so potent that a person would die after putting one in his mouth. (I. G. Report, p. 22) The official reported that the cigars were ready on October 7, 1960; TSD notes indicate that they were delivered to an unidentified person on February 13, 1961. (I. G. Report, p. 22) The record does not disclose whether an attempt was made to pass the cigars to Castro.

¹ The duty officer testified that he must have spoken with King because he would not otherwise have signed the cable "by direction, J. C. King." (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, p. 16) He also would "very definitely" have read the cable to Barnes before sending it, because "Barnes was the man to whom we went . . . for our authority and for work connected with the [Cuban] project." (Duty Officer, pp. 4, 25) Since King at that time was giving only "nominal attention" to Cuban affairs, the officer concluded that a proposal of the gravity of an assassination could only have "come from Mr. Barnes". (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, p. 24)

² The duty officer remembered the cable and some of the surrounding facts for precisely that reason: "[I]t was an unusual type of [cable], and I say this because I can remember it 15 years later." (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, p. 14.) The case officer recalled that when he saw the cable, he "swallowed hard." (Case Officer interview, 8/4/75, p. 3)

(b) *Use of Underworld Figures—Phase I (Pre-Bay of Pigs)*(i) *The Initial Plan*

In August 1960, the CIA took steps to enlist members of the criminal underworld with gambling syndicate contacts to aid in assassinating Castro. The origin of the plot is uncertain. According to the 1967 Inspector General's Report,

Bissell recalls that the idea originated with J. C. King, then Chief of W. H. Division, although King now recalls having only had limited knowledge of such a plan and at a much later date—about mid-1962. (I. G. Report, p. 14)

Bissell testified that:

I remember a conversation which I would have put in early autumn or late summer between myself and Colonel Edwards [Director of the Office of Security], and I have some dim recollection of some earlier conversation I had had with Colonel J. C. King, Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, and the subject matter of both of those conversations was a capability to eliminate Castro if such action should be decided upon. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 19)

The earliest concrete evidence of the operation is a conversation between DDP Bissell and Colonel Sheffield Edwards, Director of the Office of Security.¹ Edwards recalled that Bissell asked him to locate someone who could assassinate Castro. (Edwards, 5/30/75, pp. 2-3) Bissell confirmed that he requested Edwards to find someone to assassinate Castro and believed that Edwards raised the idea of contacting members of a gambling syndicate operating in Cuba.² (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 71-73)

Edwards assigned the mission to the Chief of the Operational Support Division of the Office of Security. The Support Chief recalled that Edwards had said that he and Bissell were looking for someone to "eliminate" or "assassinate" Castro. (Operational Support Chief, hereinafter "O.C.", 5/30/75, pp. 6-8, 95-96)³

Edwards and the Support Chief decided to rely on Robert A. Maheu to recruit someone "tough enough" to handle the job. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 8) Maheu was an ex-FBI agent who had entered into a career as a private investigator in 1954. A former FBI associate of Maheu's was employed in the CIA's Office of Security and had arranged for the CIA to use Maheu in several sensitive covert operations in which "he didn't want to have an Agency person or a government person get caught."⁴ (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 158) Maheu was initially paid a monthly

¹ The Inspector General's Report placed the conversation between Edwards and Bissell in August 1960. Bissell testified that he would not have remembered the exact month without having been shown the Inspector General's Report, but that "I would have remembered initial conversations early in the autumn of 1960" (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 18).

² Although Castro closed the gambling casinos in Cuba when he first came to power, they were reopened for use by foreign tourists in late February 1959, and remained open until late September 1961.

³ Howard Osborn, who became Director of the Office of Security in 1964, told the Committee that the DDP often drew upon personnel of the Office of Security, which was within a different directorate, because of the contacts and expertise that Security personnel developed in the field. This is an example of operations being carried out across formal organization lines. The fact that Bissell called on Edwards might indicate that Bissell had already formulated a plan and was relying on Edwards to put it in to practice.

⁴ During 1954-1955, Maheu cooperated with the CIA in attempting to undermine a contract with the Saudi Arabian government that would have given one person virtually complete control over shipping of oil from Saudi Arabia. Although he was employed by a competitor of the person who held the contract, Maheu worked closely with the CIA. Maheu testified that, after consulting with the Agency, he arranged for a listening device to be placed in the room of the contract holder; and that he provided the impetus for the termination of the contract by publicizing its terms in a Rome newspaper which he said he had purchased with CIA funds. (Maheu, 7/30/75, pp. 14-25)

The Support Chief testified that at the CIA's request Maheu had also previously arranged for the production of a film in Hollywood purporting to depict a foreign leader with a woman in the Soviet Union. The CIA planned to circulate the film, representing it to have been produced by the Soviet Union. The film was never used. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 159, 162-163.) Maheu testified that he had located an actor resembling the leader and had arranged for the production of the film. (Maheu, 7/30/75, pp. 39-43)

retainer by the CIA of \$500, but it was terminated after his detective agency became more lucrative. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 13-14; I.G. Report, p. 15) The Operational Support Chief had served as Maheu's case officer since the Agency first began using Maheu's services, and by 1960 they had become close personal friends. (Maheu, 7/30/75, p. 6)

Sometime in late August or early September 1960, the Support Chief approached Maheu about the proposed operation. (O.C. 5/30/75, p. 9; Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 6) As Maheu recalls the conversation, the Support Chief asked him to contact John Rosselli, an underworld figure with possible gambling contacts in Las Vegas, to determine if he would participate in a plan to "dispose" of Castro.¹ (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 8) The Support Chief testified, on the other hand, that it was Maheu who raised the idea of using Rosselli. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 15-16)

Maheu had known Rosselli since the late 1950's. (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 58-60) Although Maheu claims not to have been aware of the extent of Rosselli's underworld connections and activities, he recalled that "it was certainly evident to me that he was able to accomplish things in Las Vegas when nobody else seemed to get the same kind of attention." (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 60)

The Support Chief had previously met Rosselli at Maheu's home. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 8) The Support Chief and Maheu each claimed that the other had raised the idea of using Rosselli, and Maheu said the Chief was aware that Rosselli had contacts with the gambling syndicate. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 8; O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 15-16)

At first Maheu was reluctant to become involved in the operation because it might interfere with his relationship with his new client, Howard Hughes.² He finally agreed to participate because he felt that he owed the Agency a commitment. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 12-13, 103) The Inspector General's Report states that:

Edwards and Maheu agreed that Maheu would approach Rosselli as the representative of businessmen with interests in Cuba who saw the elimination of Castro as the first essential step to the recovery of their investments. (I.G. Report, p. 16)

The Support Chief also recalled that Maheu was to use this cover story when he presented the plan to Rosselli. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 16) but Rosselli said that the story was developed after he had been contacted, and was used as a mutual "cover" by him, the Chief, and Maheu in dealing with Cubans who were subsequently recruited for the project. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 16-17) The Support Chief testified that Maheu was told to offer money, probably \$150,000, for Castro's assassination.³ (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 16, 111; Memo, Osborn to DCI, 6/24/66)

(ii) *Contact With the Syndicate*

According to Rosselli, he and Maheu met at the Brown Derby Restaurant in Beverly Hills in early September 1960. Rosselli testi-

¹ Maheu testified that he was told that the plan to assassinate Castro was one phase of a larger project to invade Cuba. (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 7, 13, 47)

² Maheu told the Committee that at that time, Hughes was becoming an important client, and that devoting time to the CIA's assassination plot was hindering his work for Hughes. He testified that shortly before the election in November 1960, while he was in Miami working on the assassination project, Hughes phoned and asked him to return to the West Coast. Maheu testified that since he did "not want to lose" Hughes as a client, he "definitely told him that the project was on behalf of the United States Government, that it included plans to dispose of Mr. Castro in connection with a pending invasion." (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 22-23)

³ The Inspector General's Report states that "Maheu was authorized to tell Rosselli that his clients were willing to pay \$150,000 for Castro's removal." (I.G. Report, p. 16) The evidence varies, however, with respect to the amount that was offered.

fied that Maheu told him that "high government officials" needed his cooperation in getting rid of Castro, and that he asked him to help recruit Cubans to do the job. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 8) Maheu's recollection of that meeting was that "I informed him that I had been asked by my Government to solicit his cooperation in this particular venture." (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 9)

Maheu stated that Rosselli "was very hesitant about participating in the project, and he finally said that he felt that he had an obligation to his government, and he finally agreed to participate." (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 10) Maheu and Rosselli both testified that Rosselli insisted on meeting with a representative of the Government. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 9; Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 9)

A meeting was arranged for Maheu and Rosselli with the Support Chief at the Plaza Hotel in New York. The Inspector General's Report placed the meeting on September 14, 1960. (I.G. Report, p. 16) Rosselli testified that he could not recall the precise date of the meeting, but that it had occurred during Castro's visit to the United Nations, which the New York Times Index places from September 18 through September 28, 1960. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 10)

The Support Chief testified that he was introduced to Rosselli as a business associate of Maheu. He said that Maheu told Rosselli that Maheu represented international business interests which were pooling money to pay for the assassination of Castro. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 26) Rosselli claimed that Maheu told him at that time that the Support Chief was with the CIA.¹ (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 11, 85)

It was arranged that Rosselli would go to Florida and recruit Cubans for the operation. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 11-12) Edwards informed Bissell that contact had been made with the gambling syndicate. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 20-21; I.G. Report, p. 17)

During the week of September 24, 1960 the Support Chief, Maheu, and Rosselli met in Miami to work out the details of the operation. (O.C. 5/30/75, pp. 25-26; Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 12; I.G. Report, p. 18) Rosselli used the cover name "John Rawlston" and represented himself to the Cuban contacts as an agent of " * * * some business interests of Wall Street that had * * * nickel interests and properties around in Cuba, and I was getting financial assistance from them." (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 9, 17)

Maheu handled the details of setting up the operation and keeping the Support Chief informed of developments. After Rosselli and Maheu had been in Miami for a short time, and certainly prior to October 18,² Rosselli introduced Maheu to two individuals on whom

¹ The weight of the testimony indicates that Rosselli realized the CIA was behind the assassination attempt at an early stage. Maheu substantially confirmed his account (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 111) The support chief recalled that about three weeks after the New York meeting, Rosselli told him, "I am not kidding, I know who you work for." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 26.)

² Maheu recalls that he first met "Sam Gold" (Giancana) after November 1960, when he was staying at the Fontainebleau Hotel. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 17) Other evidence indicates that the meeting took place earlier. When they first went to Miami, Maheu and Rosselli stayed at the Kennilworth Hotel (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 15-16); FBI records reveal that Maheu and Rosselli (alias J. A. Rollins) were registered at the Kennilworth from October 11-30. (FBI summary, p. 10). Giancana must have been involved in the operation during the October period at the Kennilworth because (1) the wiretap of the apartment, discussed *infra*, was made on October 30; (2) on October 18, the FBI sent a memorandum to Bissell stating that Giancana had been telling several people that he was involved in an assassination attempt against Castro. No reference is made to the CIA in this memorandum. (See *infra*, p. 79)

Rosselli intended to rely: "Sam Gold," who would serve as a "back-up man" (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 15), or "key" man (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 17), and "Joe," whom "Gold" said would serve as a courier to Cuba and make arrangements there. (I.G., Report p. 19) The Support Chief, who was using the name "Jim Olds," said he had met "Sam" and "Joe" once, and then only briefly. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 26-29)

The Support Chief testified that he learned the true identities of his associates one morning when Maheu called and asked him to examine the "Parade" supplement to the *Miami Times*.¹ An article on the Attorney General's ten-most-wanted criminals list revealed that "Sam Gold" was Momo Salvatore Giancana, a Chicago-based gangster,² and "Joe" was Santos Trafficante, the Cosa Nostra chieftain in Cuba.³ (I.G., Report, p. 19) The Support Chief reported his discovery to Edwards, (O.C. 5/30/75, pp. 31, 33) but did not know whether Edwards reported this fact to his superiors. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 32, 41) The Support Chief testified that this incident occurred after "we were up to our ears in it," a month or so after Giancana had been brought into the operation, but prior to giving the poison pills to Rosselli. (O.C. 5/30/75, pp. 30, 44)

Maheu recalled that it was Giancana's job to locate someone in Castro's entourage who could accomplish the assassination. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 19) and that he met almost daily with Giancana over a substantial period of time. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 18) Although Maheu described Giancana as playing a "key role," (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 34) Rosselli claimed that none of the Cubans eventually used in the operation were acquired through Giancana's contacts. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 15)

(iii) Las Vegas Wiretap

In late October 1960, Maheu arranged for a Florida investigator, Edward DuBois, to place an electronic "bug" in a room in Las Vegas. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 36) 'DuBois' employee, Arthur J. Balletti, flew to Las Vegas and installed a tap on the phone. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 38) The Support Chief characterized the ensuing events as a "Keystone Comedy act." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 68). On October 31, 1960, Balletti, believing that the apartment would be vacant for the afternoon, left the wiretap equipment unattended. A maid discovered the equipment and notified the local sheriff, who arrested Balletti and brought him to the jail. Balletti called Maheu in Miami, tying "Maheu into this thing up to his ear." (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 36-37) Balletti's bail was paid by Rosselli. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 52)

(1) *CIA Involvement In The Wiretap*.—The Committee received conflicting evidence on whether the Agency was consulted prior to

¹ A search of supplements to all Miami papers during this period did not reveal the article described by the Support Chief.

² Sam Giancana was murdered in his home on June 20, 1975.

³ Trafficante made regular trips between Miami and Cuba on gambling syndicate business. (I.G., Report, pp. 19-20)

⁴ According to the Support Chief and Rosselli, DuBois had been requested to place what they characterized as a "legal" electronic bug against the wall from an adjacent apartment. Balletti instead installed an electronic tap on the phone. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 67-68; Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 36-37)

the installation of the tap.¹ The Support Chief testified that he had called Edwards and cleared the placement of an electronic "bug" in the apartment prior to the installation of the tap. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 67-71) Maheu recalled that he had initially asked the Support Chief if the CIA would handle the job, and that the Chief had told him that:

He would call Mr. Edwards and see if they would have the capability of accomplishing this * * * and that subsequently he informed me that Mr. Edwards had said that they would not do it, but approved paying for it if we hired an independent private detective to put it on. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 37)

On the other hand, Edwards, in a May 14, 1962 memorandum for the Attorney General (discussed at length, *infra*, p. 131), stated that "At the time of the incident neither the Agency nor the undersigned knew of the proposed technical installation."²

The Inspector General's Report accepted Edwards' assertion that "the Agency was first unwitting and then a reluctant accessory after the fact," but offered no further evidence to support that contention. (I.G. Report, p. 67)

The Committee also received conflicting evidence concerning whether the tap had been placed to keep Giancana in Miami or to check on security leaks. The Support Chief testified that during the early stages of negotiations with the gambling syndicate, Maheu informed him that a girl friend of Giancana was having an affair with the target of the tap. Giancana wanted Maheu to bug that person's room; otherwise, Giancana threatened to fly to Las Vegas himself. Maheu was concerned that Giancana's departure would disrupt the negotiations, and secured the Chief's permission to arrange for a bug to insure Giancana's presence and cooperation. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 68-69) Maheu substantially confirmed this account. (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 25-30)³

There is some evidence, however, suggesting that the CIA itself may have instituted the tap to determine whether Giancana was leaking information about his involvement in an assassination attempt

¹ Regardless of whether the CIA initially authorized the tap, it is apparent that the CIA paid for the tap. DuBois told FBI agents that Maheu had paid him a retainer of \$1,000. (File B-505, p. 14). The Support Chief confirmed that CIA "indirectly" paid for the tap because "we paid Maheu a certain amount of money, and he just paid it out of what we were giving him."

² "Q: But it was understood, or you understood, that out of the money the CIA made available to Maheu, DuBois would be paid for the tap?"

"A: Yes."

³ "Q: And Colonel Edwards * * * knew somebody was being employed in order to accomplish a tap?"

"A: That is right." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 69)

⁴ However, a memorandum by J. Edgar Hoover states that the Attorney General said he had been told by Edwards in 1962 that the "CIA admitted that they had assisted Maheu in making the installation." (Memo from Hoover, 5/10/62)

⁵ An acquaintance of Giancana's, Joseph Shimon, testified that Giancana had told him that Giancana had asked Rosselli to request Maheu to arrange for surveillance of the room to determine the occupant's relationship with Giancana's girl friend. (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 21) Shimon stated that Giancana had told him that Giancana had paid Maheu \$5,000 for the tap, that the CIA had not known about the tap in advance, and that Maheu subsequently decided to use his connection with the CIA operation to avoid prosecution for his involvement in the tap. (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 23) Maheu testified that he did not recall having been paid for the tap. (Maheu, 9/23/75, p. 7)

against Castro.¹ An October 18, 1960 memorandum from J. Edgar Hoover to Bissell, stated that "a source whose reliability has not been tested" reported:

[D]uring recent conversations with several friends, Giancana stated that Fidel Castro was to be done away with very shortly. When doubt was expressed regarding this statement, Giancana reportedly assured those present that Castro's assassination would occur in November. Moreover, he allegedly indicated that he had already met with the assassin-to-be on three occasions. * * * Giancana claimed that everything has been perfected for the killing of Castro, and that the "assassin" had arranged with a girl, not further described, to drop a "pill" in some drink or food of Castro's. (Memo, Hoover to DCI (Att: DDP), 10/18/60)

Rosselli testified that Maheu had given him two explanations for the tap on different occasions: First, that Giancana was concerned that his girl friend was having an affair; and, second, that he had arranged the tap to determine whether Giancana had told his girl friend about the assassination plot, and whether she was spreading the story. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 47-48) Maheu gave the second explanation to the FBI when he was questioned about his involvement in the tap (Summary File by FBI), and Edwards wrote in the memorandum to the Attorney General:

Maheu stated that Sam Giancana thought that [Giancana's girl friend] might know of the proposed operation and might pass on the information to * * * a friend of [Giancana's girl friend]. (Memo Edwards to Attorney General, 5/14/62)

(2) *Consequences Of The Wiretap.*—Edwards told Maheu that if he was "approached by the FBI, he could refer them to me to be briefed that he was engaged in an intelligence operation directed at Cuba". (Memo, Edwards to Attorney General, 5/14/62) FBI records indicate that on April 18, 1961, Maheu informed the FBI that the tap involved the CIA, and suggested that Edwards be contacted. (Memo 4/20/61) Edwards subsequently informed the Bureau that the CIA would object to Maheu's prosecution because it might reveal sensitive information relating to the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion.²

In a memo dated April 24, 1962, Herbert J. Miller, Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, advised the Attorney General that the "national interest" would preclude any prosecutions based upon the tap. Following a briefing of the Attorney General by the CIA, a decision was made not to prosecute.³

(iv) *Poison Is Prepared And Delivered to Cuba*

The Inspector General's Report described conversations among Bissell, Edwards, and the Chief of the Technical Services Division

¹ When Rosselli talked with Giancana after the wiretap had been discovered, Giancana "laughed * * * I remember his expression, smoking a cigar, he almost swallowed it laughing about it" (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 52). Rosselli claims that he was "perturbed" because "It was blowing everything, blowing every kind of cover that I had tried to arrange to keep quiet" (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 52).

Rosselli said that he told Giancana that the CIA was involved in the operation "in order to have him keep his mouth shut" (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 26-27).

² Details of the discussions between the CIA and FBI are described fully *infra* at pp. 125-135.

³ Maheu subsequently drew on his involvement with the CIA to avoid testifying before Senator Edward Long's Committee investigating invasions of privacy in 1966. According to the Inspector General's Report, when Maheu learned that the Committee intended to call him, "he applied pressure on the Agency in a variety of ways—suggesting that publicity might expose his past sensitive work for the CIA." (I.G. Report, pp. 75-74) Lawrence Houston, General Counsel for the CIA, met with Maheu and his attorney, Edward F. Morgan, and informed Senator Long that Maheu had been involved in CIA operations (Houston, 6/2/75, pp. 58-60). As a result, the Long Committee did not call Maheu to testify.

(TSD), concerning the most effective method of poisoning Castro. (I.G. Report, pp. 23-33) There is some evidence that Giancana or Rosselli originated the idea of depositing a poison pill in Castro's drink to give the "asset" a chance to escape. (I.G. Report, p. 25) The Support Chief recalled Rosselli's request for something "nice and clean, without getting into any kind of out and out ambushing", preferably a poison that would disappear without a trace. (O.C. 5/30/75, p. 116) The Inspector General's Report cited the Support Chief as stating that the Agency had first considered a "gangland-style killing" in which Castro would be gunned down. Giancana reportedly opposed the idea because it would be difficult to recruit someone for such a dangerous operation, and suggested instead the use of poison. (I.G. Report, p. 25)

Edwards rejected the first batch of pills prepared by TSD because they would not dissolve in water. A second batch, containing botulinum toxin, "did the job expected of them" when tested on monkeys. (I.G. Report, pp. 25-26; O.C. 5/30/75, p. 43) The Support Chief received the pills from TSD, probably in February 1961, with assurances that they were lethal,¹ and then gave them to Rosselli. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 43)

The record clearly establishes that the pills were given to a Cuban for delivery to the island some time prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion in mid-April 1961. There are discrepancies in the record, however, concerning whether one or two attempts were made during that period, and the precise date on which the passage[s] occurred. The Inspector General's Report states that in late February or March 1961, Rosselli reported to the Support Chief that the pills had been delivered to an official close to Castro who may have received kickbacks from the gambling interests. (I.G. Report, p. 23) The Report states that the official returned the pills after a few weeks, perhaps because he had lost his position in the Cuban Government, and thus access to Castro, before he received the pills. (I.G. Report, p. 28) The Report concludes that yet another attempt was made in April 1961, with the aid of a leading figure in the Cuban exile movement.

Rosselli and the Support Chief testified that the Cuban official described by the Inspector General as having made the first attempt was indeed involved in the assassination plot, and they ascribed his failure to a case of "cold feet." (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 24; O.C. 5/30/75, p. 44) Rosselli was certain, however, that only one attempt to assassinate Castro had been made prior to the Bay of Pigs, (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 26) and the Support Chief and Mahen did not clarify the matter. It is possible then, that only one pre-Bay of Pigs attempt was made, and that the Cuban exile leader was the contact in the United States who arranged for the Cuban described in the Inspector General's Report to administer the poison.

In any event, Rosselli told the Support Chief that Trafficante believed a certain leading figure in the Cuban exile movement might be able to accomplish the assassination. (I.G. Report, p. 29)² The Inspec-

¹ Records of the TSD still extant when the I.G. Report was written in 1967 indicate that the pills were tested on February 10 and delivered to the Support Chief sometime thereafter.

² The Support Chief testified that he met this Cuban only once, and that after the meeting the Cuban told Rosselli:

"Look, I don't know [sic] like the CIA and you can't tell me that this guy isn't a CIA man." The Support Chief recalled, "I don't know whether I showed it or what, but he suspected that I wasn't what I was represented to be." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 22)

tor General's Report suggests that this Cuban may have been receiving funds from Trafficante and other racketeers interested in securing "gambling, prostitution, and dope monopolies" in Cuba after the overthrow of Castro. The Report speculated that the Cuban was interested in the assassination scheme as a means of financing the purchase of arms and communications equipment. (I.G. Report, p. 31)

The Cuban claimed to have a contact inside a restaurant frequented by Castro. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 21) As a prerequisite to the deal, he demanded cash and \$1,000 worth of communications equipment. (I.G. Report, pp. 31, 32; O.C., 5/30/75, p. 23) The Support Chief recalled that Colonel J. C. King, head of the Western Hemisphere Division, gave him \$50,000 in Bissell's office to pay the Cuban if he successfully assassinated Castro. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 17-21) The Support Chief stated that Bissell also authorized him to give the Cuban the requested electronics equipment. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 20-24)

Bissell testified that he did not doubt that some cash was given to the Support Chief, and that he was aware that the poison pills had been prepared. Bissell did not recall the meeting described above, and considered it unlikely that the Support Chief would have been given the money in his office. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 40) The Inspector General's Report, relying on an Office of Security memorandum to the DDCI dated June 24, 1966, as well as on an interview with the person who signed the voucher for the funds, placed the amount passed at \$10,000. (I.G. Report, pp. 31-32) If the Inspector General's conclusions were correct, the funds which Bissell allegedly authorized were probably the advance payment to the Cuban, and not the \$150,000 that was to be paid to him after Castro's death.

The record does clearly reflect, however, that communications equipment was delivered to the Cuban¹ and that he was paid advance money to cover his expenses, probably in the amount of \$10,000. (I.G. Report, p. 32) The money and pills were delivered at a meeting between Maheu, Rosselli, Trafficante, and the Cuban at the Fountainebleau Hotel in Miami. As Rosselli recalled, Maheu:

*** opened his briefcase and dumped a whole lot of money on his lap *** and also came up with the capsules and he explained how they were going to be used. As far as I remember, they couldn't be used in boiling soups and things like that, but they could be used in water or otherwise, but they couldn't last forever. *** It had to be done as quickly as possible. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 21)²

A different version of the delivery of the pills to the Cuban was given to the Committee by Joseph Shimon, a friend of Rosselli and Giancana who testified that he was present when the passage occurred. Shimon testified that he had accompanied Maheu to Miami to see the third Patterson-Johansson World Heavyweight Championship fight, which took place on March 12, 1961. (Shimon, 9/20/75, pp. 6-8) According to Shimon, he, Giancana, Rosselli, and Maheu shared a suite in the Fountainebleau Hotel. During a conversation, Maheu stated that he had a "contract" to assassinate Castro, and had been

¹ The Support Chief testified that a man from the communications office delivered the communications equipment that the Cuban had requested to Miami. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 20) Maheu recalled delivering an automobile which he had been told contained communications equipment to an empty lot. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 32)

² Maheu denied that this dramatic event ever occurred, and did not recall being present at a meeting at which the pills were passed. (Maheu, 7/29/75, pp. 40-41). Maheu did recall that the Support Chief showed him the pills in an envelope and told him that the pills would be given to a Cuban. (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 40)

provided with a "liquid" by the CIA to accomplish the task. (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 9) ¹ Shimon testified that Maheu had said the liquid was to be put in Castro's food, that Castro would become ill and die after two or three days, and that an autopsy would not reveal what had killed him. (Shimon, 9/20/75, pp. 9-10)

Shimon testified that the Cuban was contacted outside the Boom Boom Room of the Fountainebleau Hotel. Shimon said that Rosselli left with the Cuban, and that Maheu said, "Johnny's going to handle everything, this is Johnny's contract." (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 11) Shimon testified that Giancana subsequently told him "I am not in it, and they are asking me for the names of some guys who used to work in casinos. * * * Maheu's conning the hell out of the CIA." (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 12)

Shimon testified that a few days later, he received a phone call from Maheu, who said: " * * * did you see the paper? Castro's ill. He's going to be sick two or three days. Wow, we got him." (Shimon, 9/20/75, p. 12) ²

Rosselli testified that he did not recall Shimon's having been present when the pills were delivered to the Cuban. (Rosselli, 9/22/75, p. 5) Maheu recalled having seen the fight with Rosselli and Giancana, but did not recall whether Shimon had been present, and denied that the poison had been delivered in the lobby of the Fountainebleau. (Maheu 9/23/75, pp. 14-15)

The attempt met with failure. According to the Inspector General's Report, Edwards believed the scheme failed because Castro stopped visiting the restaurant where the "asset" was employed. Maheu suggested an alternative reason. He recalled being informed that after the pills had been delivered to Cuba, "the go signal still had to be received before in fact they were administered." (Maheu, 9/23/75, p. 42) He testified that he was informed by the Support Chief sometime after the operation that the Cubans had an opportunity to administer the pills to Fidel Castro and either Che Guevarra or Raul Castro, but that the "go signal" never came. (Maheu 7/29/75, pp. 43-44, 60-61) Maheu did not know who was responsible for giving the signal. (Maheu, 9/23/75, pp. 44-45) The Cuban subsequently returned the cash and the pills. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 19-20; Memo, Osborn to DCI, 6/24/66)

The date of the Cuban operation is unclear. The Inspector General's Report places it in March-April 1961, prior to the Bay of Pigs. (I.G. Report, p. 29) Shimon's testimony puts it around March 12, 1961. Bissell testified that the effort against Castro was called off after the Bay of Pigs, (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 52) and Maheu testified that he had no involvement in the operation after the Bay of Pigs. (Maheu, 9/23/75, p. 50) The Support Chief however, was certain that it occurred during early 1962. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 47-48)

(c) Use of Underworld Figures: Phase II (Post Bay of Pigs)

(i) Change in Leadership

The Inspector General's Report divides the gambling syndicate operation into Phase I, terminating with the Bay of Pigs, and Phase

¹ Maheu said that the poison, which he was shown on one occasion by the Support Chief, consisted of five or six gelatin capsules filled with a liquid. (Maheu, 9/23/75, pp. 35-36) Rosselli described the poison as "capsules." (Rosselli, 9/22/75, p. 4)

² The Committee has been unable to locate the newspaper account described by Shimon.

II, continuing with the transfer of the operation to William Harvey in late 1961.¹ The distinction between a clearly demarcated Phase I and Phase II may be an artificial one, as there is considerable evidence that the operation was continuous, perhaps lying dormant for the period immediately following the Bay of Pigs.²

In early 1961, Harvey was assigned the responsibility for establishing a general capability within the CIA for disabling foreign leaders, including assassination as a "last resort." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 73; Harvey, 6/25/75, pp. 34-35) The capability was called Executive Action and was later included under the cryptonym ZR/RIFLE. Executive Action and the evidence relating to its connection to the "White House" and to whether or not it involved action as well as "capability" is discussed extensively *infra* in Section (III) (c), p. 181.

Harvey's notes reflect that Bissell asked him to take over the gambling syndicate operation from Edwards and that they discussed the "application of ZR/RIFLE program to Cuba" on November 16, 1961. (I.G. Report, p. 39) Bissell confirmed that the conversation took place and accepted the November date as accurate. (Bissell, 7/17/75, pp. 12-13) He also testified that the operation "was not reactivated, in other words, no instructions went out to Rosselli or to others * * * to renew the attempt, until after I had left the Agency in February 1962." (Bissell, 6/11/75, pp. 52-53.) Harvey agreed that his conversation with Bissell was limited to exploring the feasibility of using the gambling syndicate against Castro. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 60)

Richard Helms replaced Bissell as DDP in February 1962. As such, he was Harvey's superior. The degree to which Helms knew about and participated in the assassination plot is discussed in the section of this Report dealing with the level to which the plots were authorized within the Agency.

(ii) *The Operation Is Reactivated*

In early April 1962, Harvey, who testified that he was acting on "explicit orders" from Helms, (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 18), requested Edwards to put him in touch with Rosselli. (Edwards memo, 5/14/62) The Support Chief first introduced Harvey to Rosselli in Miami, where Harvey told Rosselli to maintain his Cuban contacts, but not to deal with Maheu or Giancana, (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 50; Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 27-30) whom he had decided were "untrustworthy" and "surplus." (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 65) The Support Chief recalled that initially Rosselli did not trust Harvey although they subsequently developed a close friendship. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 52)

¹ Harvey had a long background in clandestine activities. At the time the gambling syndicate operation was moved under Harvey's supervision, he was responsible for a number of important activities and soon thereafter was selected to head of Task Force W, the CIA component of the Kennedy Administration's cover effort to oust Castro.

² Harvey said that he took over a "going operation" from Edwards (I.G. Report, p. 42; Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 67) and emphasized that: "I would like to make as clear as I can that there was no Phase 1. Phase 2 in this. This is an ongoing matter which I was injected into * * *." (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 90)

Continuity was provided by retaining the Support Chief as the case officer for the project well into May 1962. During interviews for the Inspector General's Report, the Support Chief recalled that there was "something going on" between the Bay of Pigs and Harvey's assumption of control (I.G. Report, p. 43). When testifying before the Committee, the Support Chief firmly recalled several trips to Miami in the fall of 1961, and "right up to the time I turned it over to Harvey I was in and out of Miami." (O.C. 5/30/75, pp. 89-90)

Harvey, the Support Chief and Rosselli met for a second time in New York on April 8-9, 1962. (I.G. Report, p. 43) A notation made during this time in the files of the Technical Services Division indicates that four poison pills were given to the Support Chief on April 18, 1962. (I.G. Report, pp. 46-47) The pills were passed to Harvey, who arrived in Miami on April 21, and found Rosselli already in touch with the same Cuban who had been involved in the pre-Bay of Pigs pill passage. (I.G. Report, p. 47) He gave the pills to Rosselli, explaining that "these would work anywhere and at any time with anything." (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 31) Rosselli testified that he told Harvey that the Cubans intended to use the pills to assassinate Che Guevara as well as Fidel and Raul Castro. According to Rosselli's testimony, Harvey approved of the targets, stating "everything is all right, what they want to do." (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 34)

The Cuban requested arms and equipment as a *quid pro quo* for carrying out the assassination operation. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 53-54) With the help of the CIA's Miami station which ran covert operations against Cuba (JM/WAVE), Harvey procured explosives, detonators, rifles, handguns, radios, and boat radar costing about \$5,000. (I.G. Report, p. 49) Harvey and the chief of the JM/WAVE station rented a U-Haul truck under an assumed name and delivered the equipment to a parking lot. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 63) The keys were given to Rosselli, who watched the delivery with the Support Chief from across the street. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 92-93) The truckload of equipment was finally picked up by either the Cuban or Rosselli's agent. (I.G. Report, pp. 49-50; Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 40) Harvey testified that the arms "could" have been for use in the assassination attempt, but that they were not given to the Cuban solely for that purpose. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 9)

Rosselli kept Harvey informed of the operation's progress. Sometime in May 1962, he reported that the pills and guns had arrived in Cuba. (Harvey, p. 64; Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 34, 42-43) On June 21, he told Harvey that the Cuban had dispatched a three-man team to Cuba. The Inspector General's report described the team's mission as "vague" and conjectured that the team would kill Castro or recruit others to do the job, using the poison pills if the opportunity arose. (I.G. Report, 6/2/75, p. 51)

Harvey met Rosselli in Miami on September 7 and 11, 1962. The Cuban was reported to be preparing to send in another three-man team to penetrate Castro's bodyguard. Harvey was told that the pills, referred to as "the medicine," were still "safe" in Cuba. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 103; I.G. Report, p. 51)

Harvey testified that by this time he had grave doubts about whether the operation would ever take place, and told Rosselli that "there's not much likelihood that this is going anyplace, or that it should be continued." (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 104) The second team never left for Cuba, claiming that "conditions" in Cuba were not right. (I.G. Report, pp. 51-52) During early January 1963, Harvey paid Rosselli \$2,700 to defray the Cuban's expenses. (I.G. Report, p. 52) Harvey terminated the operation in mid-February 1963. At a meeting with Rosselli in Los Angeles, it was agreed that Rosselli would taper off his communications with the Cubans. (I.G. Report, pp. 52-53) Rosselli testified that he simply broke off contact with the Cubans.

However, he never informed them that the offer of \$150,000 for Castro's assassination had been withdrawn.¹ (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 45)

The agency personnel who dealt with Rosselli attributed his motivation to patriotism² and testified that he was not paid for his services. According to the Support Chief, Rosselli "paid his way, he paid his own hotel fees, he paid his own travel. * * * And he never took a nickel, he said, no, as long as it is for the Government of the United States, this is the least I can do, because I owe it a lot." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 27)

Edwards agreed that Rosselli was "never paid a cent," (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 16) and Maheu testified that "Giancana was paid nothing at all, not even for expenses, and that Mr. Rosselli was given a pittance that did not even begin to cover his expenses." (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 68) It is clear, however, that the CIA did pay Rosselli's hotel bill during his stay in Miami in October 1960.³ The CIA's involvement with Rosselli caused the Agency some difficulty during Rosselli's subsequent prosecutions for fraudulent gambling activities and living in the country under an assumed name.⁴

(d) Plans in Early 1963

Two plans to assassinate Castro were explored by Task Force W, the CIA section then concerned with covert Cuban operations, in early 1963. Desmond Fitzgerald (now deceased), Chief of the Task Force, asked his assistant to determine whether an exotic seashell, rigged to explode, could be deposited in an area where Castro commonly went skin diving. (Assistant, 9/18/75, p. 28) The idea was explored by the Technical Services Division and discarded as impractical. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 135; I.G. Report, p. 77)

A second plan involved having James Donovan (who was negotiating with Castro for the release of prisoners taken during the Bay of Pigs operation) present Castro with a contaminated diving suit.⁵ (Colby, 5/21/75, pp. 38-39)

¹ "Q: As far as those Cubans knew, then the offer which they understood from you to come from Wall Street was still outstanding?"

"A: I don't know if they still think so * * * I didn't see them after that to tell them that. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 45)"

² Rosselli claims that he was motivated by "honor and dedication." (Rosselli, 6/24/75, p. 59)

In 1943, Rosselli had been convicted of extorting money from motion picture producers to insure studios against labor strikes, and during the period of his contacts with the CIA. Rosselli was deeply involved in hotel and gambling operations in Las Vegas. (File R-505, Summary of FBI Documents) It is possible that he believed cooperating with the government in the assassination operation might serve him well in the future.

³ FBI reports reveal that Rosselli's expenses at the Kennilworth Hotel, where he was registered from October 11-30, 1960, under the name of J. A. Rollins, were paid by Maheu. FBI file summary p. 10) Maheu's expenses were reimbursed by the CIA.

⁴ In May 1966, the FBI threatened to deport Rosselli for living in the United States under an assumed name unless he cooperated in an investigation of the Mafia. (Rosselli, whose true name is Filippo Saco, was born in Italy and was allegedly brought illegally into the United States while still a child.) Rosselli contacted Edwards, who informed the FBI that Rosselli wanted to "keep square with the Bureau," but was afraid that gangsters might kill him for "talking." (Memo. Osborn to FBI, 5/27/66) After Rosselli was arrested for fraudulent gambling activities at the Friars Club in Beverly Hills in 1967, he requested Harvey, who had left the Agency, to represent him. (Memo for Record by Osborn, 12/11/67) Harvey contacted the Agency and suggested that it prevent the prosecution. (Osborn Memo, *supra*) Rosselli was subsequently convicted of violating United States interstate gambling laws. In 1971, the CIA approached the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Justice, to "forestall public disclosure of Rosselli's past operational activity with CIA" that might occur if deportation proceedings were brought. (Letter, CIA to Select Committee, 7/21/75) It was agreed that CIA would be kept informed of developments in that case. The deportation order is presently being litigated in the courts.

⁵ Donovan was not aware of the plan.

The Inspector General's Report dates this operation in January 1963, when Fitzgerald replaced Harvey as Chief of Task Force W, although it is unclear whether Harvey or Fitzgerald conceived the plan. (I.G. Report, p. 75) It is likely that the activity took place earlier, since Donovan had completed his negotiations by the middle of January 1963. Helms characterized the plan as "cockeyed." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 135)

The Technical Services Division bought a diving suit, dusted the inside with a fungus that would produce a chronic skin disease (Madura foot), and contaminated the breathing apparatus with a tubercule bacillus. The Inspector General's Report states that the plan was abandoned because Donovan gave Castro a different diving suit on his own initiative. (I.G., Report, p. 75) Helms testified that the diving suit never left the laboratory. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 135)

(e) AM/LASH

(i) *Origin of the Project*

In early 1961, a CIA official met with a highly-placed Cuban official to determine if the Cuban would cooperate in efforts against the Castro regime. (I.G. Report, p. 78) The Cuban was referred to by the cryptonym AM/LASH.¹ The meeting was inconclusive, but led to subsequent meetings at which AM/LASH agreed to cooperate with the CIA.

The CIA regarded AM/LASH as an important "asset" inside Cuba. As a high-ranking leader who enjoyed the confidence of Fidel Castro, AM/LASH could keep the CIA informed of the internal workings of the regime. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 23, 40) It was also believed that he might play a part in fomenting a coup within Cuba. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 43)²

From the first contact with AM/LASH until the latter part of 1963, it was uncertain whether he would defect or remain in Cuba. His initial requests to the CIA and FBI for aid in defecting were rebuffed. (I.G. Report, pp. 80, 82-83) When Case Officer 1 joined the operation in June 1962, his assignment was to ensure that AM/LASH would "stay in place and report to us." (Case Officer 1, 8/11/75, p. 38) At a meeting in the fall of 1963, AM/LASH 1 stated that he would remain in Cuba if he "could do something really significant for the creation of a new Cuba" and expressed a desire to plan the "execution" of Fidel Castro. (Case Officer 1 Contact Report) The subject of assassinating Castro was again discussed by AM/LASH and the case officer at another meeting a few days later. The case officer's contact report states that assassination was raised in discussing AM/LASH's role in Cuba, and that AM/LASH was visibly upset. "It was not the act that he objected to, but merely the choice of

¹ The Committee has taken the testimony of the two case officers involved in the AM/LASH project. Case officer 1 dealt with AM/LASH through September 1963; Case officer 2 continued until mid-1965. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 11) The Committee has agreed not to divulge their names as they are still in active service with the Agency.

² AM/LASH was the major "asset" in the AM/LASH operation. During this period the CIA also sponsored a separate operation to "penetrate the Cuban military to encourage either defections or an attempt to produce information from dissidents, or perhaps even to forming a group which would be capable of replacing the then present government in Cuba. (Case Officer 1, 8/11/75, pp. 18, 22) The case officers for AM/LASH were also involved in this second related program.

the word used to describe it. 'Eliminate' was acceptable." (Case Officer 1, Contact Report)

Each case officer testified that he did not ask AM/LASH to assassinate Castro. The record clearly reveals, however, that both officers were aware of his desire to take such action. A cable to Headquarters reporting on a 1963 meeting with AM/LASH stated:

Have no intention give AM/LASH physical elimination mission as requirement but recognize this something he could or might try to carry out on his own initiative.¹

At a meeting late in the fall of 1963, AM/LASH again raised the possibility of defecting, but indicated that he would be willing to continue working against the Castro Regime if he received firm assurances of American support. According to Case Officer 2, AM/LASH requested military supplies, a device with which to protect himself if his plots against Castro were discovered, and a meeting with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 48-49)

Desmond Fitzgerald, Chief of the Special Affairs Staff,² agreed to meet AM/LASH and give him the assurances he sought. The Inspector General's Report states that Fitzgerald consulted with the DDP, Helms, who agreed that Fitzgerald should hold himself out as a personal representative of Attorney General Kennedy. (I.G. Report, p. 89)³

Helms testified that he did not recall the conversation with Fitzgerald. He also said that he had not consulted the Attorney General and speculated that his reason for not having done so might have been because "this was so central to the whole theme of what we had been trying to do * * * (find someone inside Cuba who might head a government and have a group to replace Castro). This is obviously what we had been pushing, what everybody had been pushing for us to try to do, and it is in that context that I would have made some remark like this." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 117)

Helms recalled that he told Fitzgerald to "go ahead and say that from the standpoint of political support, the United States government will be behind you if you are successful. This had nothing to do with killings. This had only to do with the political action part of it." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 131)

Fitzgerald met AM/LASH in late fall 1963 and promised him that the United States would support a coup against Castro. (Case

¹ Case Officer 1 testified that AM/LASH discussed "eliminating" Castro, although he attributed such remarks to AM/LASH's "mercurial" nature, and stated that no specific plans for assassinations were ever discussed. (Case Officer 1, 8/11/75, pp. 39-41, 62) The Case Officer who took over the AM/LASH project in September 1963 recalled being briefed by Case Officer 1 on AM/LASH's belief that Castro's assassination was a necessary first step in a coup. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 28)

² The second AM/LASH Case Officer described the context in which AM/LASH generally raised the topic of assassination:

"You also must recognize that AM/LASH was a rather temperamental man whose temperament was of a mercurial nature and whereas he may have said something like this in one fit of pique, he would settle down and talk about organizing a regular military coup in the next breath." (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 29)

³ The Special Affairs Staff (SAS) was the name given to Task Force W in early 1963 when Fitzgerald replaced Harvey as head of the covert Cuban operations. The AM/LASH Case Officers reported directly to Fitzgerald.

⁴ The contact plan for the proposed meeting stated: "Fitzgerald will represent self as personal representative of Robert F. Kennedy who travelled to (foreign city) for specific purpose meeting AM/LASH and giving him assurances of full support with a change of the present government in Cuba."

Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 60)¹ When later interviewed for the Inspector General's Report, Fitzgerald recalled that AM/LASH repeatedly requested an assassination weapon, particularly a "high-powered rifle with telescopic sights that could be used to kill Castro from a distance." Fitzgerald stated that he told AM/LASH that the United States would have "no part of an attempt on Castro's life." (I.G. Report, p. 90) Case Officer 2 recalled that AM/LASH raised the prospect of assassinating Castro, but did not propose an explicit plan. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 62, 85) AM/LASH was, however, "convinced that Castro had to be removed from power before a coup could be undertaken in Cuba." (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 61)

AM/LASH also requested high-powered rifles and grenades. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 77) A memorandum by Case Officer 2 states:

C/SAS [Fitzgerald] approved telling AM/LASH he would be given a cache inside Cuba. Cache could, if he requested it, include * * * high-powered rifles with scopes * * *

AM/LASH was told on November 22, 1963 that the cache would be dropped in Cuba. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 92)

(ii) *The Poison Pen Device*

Another device offered to AM/LASH was a ball-point pen rigged with a hypodermic needle. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 110) The needle was designed to be so fine that the victim would not notice its insertion. Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 103)

According to the Inspector General's Report, when Case Officer 2 was interviewed in 1967, he stated that AM/LASH had requested the Agency to "devise some technical means of doing the job that would not automatically cause him to lose his own life in the try." (I.G. Report, p. 92)

The Report concluded that: "although none of the participants so stated, it may be inferred that they were seeking a means of assassination of a sort that AM/LASH might reasonably have been expected to have devised himself." (I.G. Report, p. 92)

Fitzgerald's assistant told the Committee that the pen was intended to show "bona fides" and "the orders were to do something to get rid of Castro * * * and we thought this other method might work whereas a rifle wouldn't." (Assistant, 9/18/75, p. 26)

Helms confirmed that the pen was manufactured "to take care of a request from him that he have some device for getting rid of Castro, for killing him, murdering him, whatever the case may be." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 113)

"* * * [t]his was a temporizing gesture." (Helms, 6/11/75, p. 133)²

¹ Case Officer 2 was present at the meeting. He did not recall whether Robert Kennedy's name was used. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 60)

² In his testimony before the Committee, Case Officer 2 offered a conflicting story. He said that the purpose of the pen was "to provide AM/LASH with a device which would serve him to protect him in case he was confronted with and charged with being involved in a military coup against Castro." (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 107) According to the case officer, AM/LASH had requested an "esoteric device" which could easily be concealed which he could use in self-defense. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 98-99) The device was not intended for offensive use against any person, but was rather "a kind of psychological crutch . . . to help him think that we were interested in his own protection, his own security." (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 104-105) This version is wholly inconsistent with documents in the CIA files, some of which were written by the AM/LASH case officer, which establish that AM/LASH intended to kill Castro, and that the CIA knew his desire and endeavored to supply the means that he needed. These documents are set forth in the following text.

On November 22, 1963, Fitzgerald and the case officer met with AM/LASH and offered him the poison pen, recommending that he use Blackleaf-40, a deadly poison which is commercially available. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, p. 112) The Inspector General's Report noted that "it is likely that at the very moment President Kennedy was shot, a CIA officer was meeting with a Cuban agent * * * and giving him an assassination device for use against Castro." (I.G. Report, p. 94)

The case officer later recalled that AM/LASH did not "think much of the device," and complained that CIA could surely "come up with something more sophisticated than that." (I.G. Report, p. 93a).

The case officer recalled offering the pen to AM/LASH, but could not remember whether AM/LASH threw it away then or took it with him. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 105, 110) He did recall that AM/LASH said he would not take the pen back to Cuba, but did not know what AM/LASH in fact did with the pen. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 110-111)

An entry in the CIA AM/LASH files written in 1965 states:

Although Fitzgerald and the case officer assured AM/LASH on November 22, 1963 that CIA would give him everything he needed (telescopic sight, silencer, all the money he wanted) the situation changed when the case officer and Fitzgerald left the meeting to discover that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Because of this fact, plans with AM/LASH changed and it was decided that we could have no part in the assassination of a government leader (including Castro) and would not aid AM/LASH in this attempt * * *. AM/LASH was not informed of (this decision) until he was seen by the case officer in November, 1964.

In fact, however, assassination efforts involving AM/LASH continued into 1965.

(iii) Providing AM/LASH with Arms

CIA cables indicate that one cache of arms for AM/LASH was delivered in Cuba in March 1964 and another in June. An entry in the AM/LASH file for May 5, 1964 states that the case officer requested the Technical Services Division to produce, on a "crash basis," a silencer which would fit an FAL rifle. The contact report of a meeting between the case officer and a confidante of AM/LASH states that AM/LASH was subsequently informed that it was not feasible to make a silencer for an FAL rifle.

Toward the latter part of 1964, AM/LASH became more insistent that the assassination of the Cuban leadership was a necessary initial step in a successful coup. (Case Officer 2, 8/1/75, pp. 129-133) A memorandum written in the fall of 1964 stated:

AM/LASH was told and fully understands that the United States Government cannot become involved to any degree in the "first step" of his plan. If he needs support, he realizes he will have to get it elsewhere. FYI: This is where B-1 could fit in nicely in giving any support he would request.

Documents in the AM/LASH file establish that in early 1965, the CIA put AM/LASH in contact with B-1, the leader of an anti-Castro group. As the Case Officer explained to the Inspector General:

* * * What had happened was that SAS had contrived to put B-1 and AM/LASH together in such a way that neither of them knew that the contact had been engineered by CIA. The thought was that B-1 needed a man inside and

AM/LASH wanted a silenced weapon, which CIA was unwilling to furnish to him directly. By putting the two together, B-1 might get his man inside Cuba and AM/LASH might get his silenced weapon—from B-1. (I.G., Report p. 101)

A report of a meeting between a case officer and B-1 states that B-1, in his initial contacts with AM/LASH, discussed plans for assassinating Castro. AM/LASH suggested that guerrilla raids against Cuba should be stepped up one month before the "attempt on Fidel Castro" to "prepare the public and raise the morale and resistance spirit of the people." B-1 reported that:

AM/LASH believed that the only solution to the problems in Cuba would be to get rid of Fidel Castro. He is able either to shoot him with a silencer or place a bomb in some place where Fidel will be. He might use, for example, a small bomb, that he can carry and place, or with his group attack the residence where Fidel lives * * * B-1 is going to provide AM/LASH with escape routes and places where B-1 is able to pick him up. He will memorize these points and escape routes. * * * Next, B-1 is to provide AM/LASH either a silencer for a FAL or a rifle with a silencer.

A CIA document dated January 3, 1965 states that B-1, in a lengthy interview with a case officer, said that he and AM/LASH had reached firm agreement on the following points:

1. B-1 is to provide AM/LASH with a silencer for the FAL; if this is impossible, B-1 is to cache in a designated location a rifle with a scope and silencer plus several bombs, concealed either in a suitcase, a lamp or some other concealment device which he would be able to carry, and place next to Fidel Castro.

2. B-1 is to provide AM/LASH with escape routes controlled by B-1 and not by the Americans. The lack of confidence built up by the Bay of Pigs looms large.

3. B-1 is to prepare one of the western provinces, either Pinar del Rio or Havana, with arms caches and a clandestine underground mechanism. This would be a fall back position and a safe area where men and weapons are available to the group.

4. B-1 is to be in Cuba one week before the elimination of Fidel, but no one, including AM/LASH, will know B-1's location.

5. B-1 is to arrange for recognition by at least five Latin American countries as soon as Fidel is neutralized and a junta is formed. This junta will be established even though Raul Castro and Che Guevara may still be alive and may still be in control of part of the country. This is the reason AM/LASH requested that B-1 be able to establish some control over one of the provinces so that the junta can be formed in that location.

6. One month to the day before the neutralization of Fidel, B-1 will increase the number of commando attacks to a maximum in order to raise the spirit and morale of the people inside Cuba. In all communiques, in all radio messages, in all propaganda put out by B-1 he must relate that the raid was possible thanks to the information received from clandestine sources inside Cuba and from the clandestine underground apparatus directed by "P". This will be AM/LASH's war name.

A CIA cable dated in early 1965 stated that B-1 had given AM/LASH a silencer and that AM/LASH had "small, highly concentrated explosives." Shortly afterwards, a CIA station cabled that AM/LASH would soon receive "one pistol with silencer and one FAL rifle with a silencer from B-1's secretary." A subsequent cable reported that "B-1 had three packages of special items made up by his technical people and delivered to AM/LASH." (I.G., Report p. 103)

In June 1965, CIA terminated all contact with AM/LASH and his associates for reasons related to security. (I.G., Report pp. 104-105)

2. AT WHAT LEVEL WERE THE CASTRO PLOTS KNOWN ABOUT OR AUTHORIZED WITHIN THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY?

(a) *The Question Presented*

As explained in the preceding section, Richard Bissell clearly authorized the two attempts to assassinate Cuban leaders that occurred during his tenure as Deputy Director of Plans—the incident involving a Cuban in contact with Raul Castro and the attempt involving underworld figures that took place prior to the Bay of Pigs. It is also clear that Bissell's successor, Richard Helms, authorized and was aware of the attempt on Castro's life involving underworld figures that took place the year following the Bay of Pigs, although the degree of Helms' participation in the details of the plot is not certain.¹

Helms also authorized and was aware of the AM/LASH operation, although it is not certain that he knew that AM/LASH intended to assassinate Castro.² The evidence indicates that the exploding sea-shell and diving suit schemes were abandoned at the laboratory stage and that no authorization was sought for their development or eventual use.

This section deals with whether the Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles, and his successor, John McCone, authorized or were aware of the assassination plots. Dulles served as DCI from 1953 to November 1961. McCone was DCI from November 1961 to April 1965.³ General Charles Cabell served as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence under Dulles and continued into the early months of McCone's term. He was replaced as DDCI in April 1962 by General Marshall Carter.

In summary, the evidence relating to Dulles and McCone (and their respective Deputy DCI's) is as follows:

(i) *Dulles*.—Bissell and Edwards testified that they were certain that both Dulles and his Deputy General Cabell were aware of and authorized the initial phase of the assassination plot involving underworld figures. They acknowledged, however, that Dulles and Cabell were not told about the plot until after the underworld figures had been contacted. The words said to have been used to brief the Director and his Deputy—"an intelligence operation"—do not convey on their

¹ William Harvey testified that he kept Helms informed of the operation involving the underworld at all stages. (Harvey, 6/25/75, pp. 65-66) When interviewed for the Inspector General's Report, Harvey said that he briefed Helms on his first meeting with Russell, and "thereafter he regularly briefed Helms on the status of the Castro operation." (I.G. Report, p. 41).

Helms' recollection was less certain. Helms did recall that he was briefed by Harvey when Harvey first contacted Russell in April 1962. He remembered that he "reluctantly" had approved the operation, but that he had no confidence that it would succeed. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 23)

When asked if he authorized sending the poison pills to Florida, Helms testified: "I believe they were poison pills, and I don't recall necessarily approving them, but since Harvey alleges to have them and says that he took them to Miami, I must have authorized them in some fashion." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 44)

Helms confirmed that Harvey was "reporting quite regularly what was going on. Whether he reported everything or not, I do not know." It was Helms' expectation that Harvey would have reported to him a matter such as the pills. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 105) However, Helms also testified:

"You saw the I.G. Report says that I was kept currently informed. Maybe I was and maybe I wasn't, and today I don't remember it, as I have said. But I do not recall ever having been convinced that any attempt was really made on Castro's life." (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 32)

² Whether Helms was aware of AM/LASH's intention specifically to assassinate Castro, as opposed to AM/LASH's potential for leading a coup against Castro, is discussed infra, pp. 174-175.

³ Bissell served as DDP from January 1, 1959, to February 17, 1962. (President Kennedy decided to replace Dulles and Bissell because of the failure of the Bay of Pigs (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 2-6)) Helms, who had been Bissell's Deputy, succeeded Bissell in April 1962. Helms was replaced by McCone in April 1965, and McCone in June 1965.

face that the plot involved assassination, although Bissell and Edwards insist that the real meaning must have been understood. Certain other evidence before the Committee suggests that Dulles and Cabell did know about the assassination plots; other evidence suggests that they did not. (See subsection (b) below.)

(ii) *McCone*.—McCone testified that he did not know about or authorize the plots. Helms, Bissell and Harvey all testified that they did not know whether McCone knew of the assassination plots. Each said, however, that he did not tell McCone of the assassination efforts either when McCone assumed the position of DCI in November 1961 or at any time thereafter until August 1963, when Helms gave McCone a memorandum from which McCone concluded that the operation with underworld figures prior to the Bay of Pigs had involved assassination. The Inspector General's Report states that Harvey received Helms' approval not to brief McCone when the assassination efforts were resumed in 1962. Harvey testified this accorded with his recollection. On other occasions when it would have been appropriate to do so, Helms and Harvey did not tell McCone about assassination activity. Helms did not recall any agreement not to brief McCone, but he did not question the position taken by Harvey or the Inspector General's Report. Helms did say that McCone never told him not to assassinate Castro. (These matters, as well as the various reasons put forward by Harvey and Helms for not briefing McCone, are set forth in Section (c) below.)

(b) *Did Allen Dulles Know of or Authorize the Initial Plots Against Castro.*¹

Both Allen Dulles and General Cabell are deceased. The Committee's investigation of this question relied on the available documents and the testimony of those who served under Dulles and Cabell who are still living.²

(i) *Dulles' Approval of J. C. King's December 1959 Memorandum*.—On December 11, 1959, J. C. King, head of CIA's Western Hemisphere Division, wrote a memorandum to Dulles observing that a "far left" dictatorship now existed in Cuba which, "if" permitted to stand, will encourage similar actions against U.S. holdings in other Latin American countries.

One of King's four "Recommended Actions" was:

Thorough consideration be given to the elimination of Fidel Castro. None of those close of Fidel, such as his brother Raul or his companion Che Guevara, have the same mesmeric appeal to the masses. Many informed people believe that the disappearance of Fidel would greatly accelerate the fall of the present Government.

A handwritten note indicates that Dulles, with Bissell's concurrence, approved the recommendations.³

¹ This evidence relates to the aborted incident in July 1960 and what the Inspector General's Report referred to as the initial phase of the assassination effort involving the underworld. With respect to the "schemes" prior to that operation, the I. G. Report concluded it could "find no evidence that any of the schemes were approved at any level higher than division, if that." (I. G. Report, p. 10)

² The Inspector General questioned neither Dulles nor Cabell in preparing his Report in 1967, although both were then alive.

³ The Committee received this document on November 15, 1975, after printing of this Report had begun. As a consequence, there was no opportunity to question either King or Bissell concerning the meaning of "elimination", what consideration was in fact given to Castro's "elimination", and whether any planning resulting from this document in fact led to the actual plots. In this regard it should be noted that Bissell had a "dim recollection" of a conversation prior to early autumn or late summer 1960 with King (the author of the above memorandum) concerning a "capability to eliminate Castro if such action should be decided upon". (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 19) See p. 74.

(ii) *Dulles' January 1960 Statement to the Special Group.*—On January 13, 1960, Allen Dulles, in what was apparently the first Special Group discussion of a covert program to overthrow Castro, emphasized that "a quick elimination of Castro" was not contemplated by the CIA. (Special Group Minutes, 1/13/60) According to the minutes, Dulles first "noted the possibility that over the long run the U.S. will not be able to tolerate the Castro regime in Cuba, and suggested that covert contingency planning to accomplish the fall of the Castro government might be in order." Then in response to the State Department representative's comment that "timing was very important so as to permit a solidly based opposition to take over," Dulles " * * * emphasized that we do not have in mind a quick elimination of Castro, but rather actions designed to enable responsible opposition leaders to get a foothold."

(iii) *Meetings in March 1960.*—According to a memorandum of a meeting on March 9, 1960, J. C. King, Chief of CIA's Western Hemisphere Division, told the Task Force which was in charge of Cuban operations:

That the DCI is presenting a special policy paper to the NSC 5412 representatives. He mentioned growing evidence that certain of the "Heads" in the Castro government have been pushing for an attack on the U.S. Navy installation at Guantanamo Bay and said that an attack on the installation is in fact, possible.

3. Col. King stated * * * that unless Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara could be eliminated in one package—which is highly unlikely—this operation can be a long, drawn-out affair and the present government will only be overthrown by the use of force." [Memo for the Record, March 9, 1960. (Emphasis added.)]

A lengthy meeting of the National Security Council on the following day involved a discussion of American policy to "bring another government to power in Cuba." The minutes of that meeting report that:

Admiral Burke thought we needed a Cuban leader around whom anti-Castro elements could rally. Mr. Dulles said some anti-Castro leaders existed, but they are not in Cuba at present. The President said we might have another Black Hole of Calcutta in Cuba, and he wondered what we could do about such a situation * * * Mr. Dulles reported that a plan to effect the situation in Cuba was being worked on. Admiral Burke suggested that any plan for the removal of Cuban leaders should be a package deal, since many of the leaders around Castro were even worse than Castro. (Id., 9) (Emphasis added.)

On March 14, Dulles and J. C. King attended a Special Group meeting at the White House. The minutes state that:

There was a general discussion as to what would be the effect on the Cuban scene if Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara should disappear simultaneously. Admiral Burke said that the only organized group within Cuba today were the Communists and there was therefore the danger that they might move into control. Mr. Dulles felt this might not be disadvantageous because it would facilitate a multilateral action by OAS. Col. King said there were few leaders capable of taking over so far identified. [Memo for the Record, March 15, 1960 (Emphasis added.)]

Participants in these National Security Council and Special Group meetings testified that assassination was neither discussed nor considered. That testimony and details concerning the context of those meetings is set forth fully in the section dealing with whether President Eisenhower was aware of the plots against Castro.

(iv) *Rescission of Accident Plot in July 1960.*—As discussed above (pp. 72-73), in July 1960, Bissell's assistant, Tracy Barnes, approved sending a cable to CIA's Havana station stating that "possible removal of top three leaders receiving serious consideration at Head-

quarters," and giving instructions to carry out a plan to kill Raul Castro. J. C. King was the authenticating officer on the cable. A few hours later a second cable, bearing only Barnes' signature, rescinded the first.

King told the Committee that he remembered nothing of this event, and Barnes is deceased. Bissell testified that he did not remember the incident and that he did not know whether Dulles had known about the cable. (Bissell, 9/10/75, p. 74) When asked why the cable might have been rescinded, Bissell speculated that

It may well have embodied a judgment on Dulles' part that this effort concerning Raul Castro was altogether too risky, and technically not sufficiently likely of success (Bissell, 9/10/75, p. 76)

He speculated further that Headquarters might have been considering the elimination of all three Cuban leaders, and that the cable authorizing the assassination of Raul was rescinded because it fell short of that broader objective. (Bissell, 9/10/75, pp. 76-77)

The Executive Officer to the Chief of the Cuba covert action project sent the cables and testified that he had "heard" that Dulles had countermanded the plan and had indicated that "assassination was not to be considered." (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, p. 29)¹

The officer added, however, that he had no personal knowledge of the reason for calling off the plan, or even if Dulles had been the one who called it off. He further testified that:

[Dulles] indicated that assassination was not to be considered * * * This would be conforming with what I had understood the general practice was. (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, pp. 29-30)

(v) *Briefing of Dulles on Use of Underworld Figures in September 1960.*

(1) *Evidence concerning what Dulles Was Told.*—Bissell recalled that "in the latter part of September" there was "a meeting in which Col. Edwards and I briefed Mr. Dulles and General Cabell" about the plan to assassinate Castro. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 20) Bissell testified that "Colonel Edwards outlined in somewhat circumlocutious terms the plan that he had discussed with syndicate representatives." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 22) He stated that Edwards had said:

¹ The countermanding cable to the Havana station, which was "Operational Immediate," was sent the morning after the cable of the previous night. The officer who sent that cable testified:

"* * * I saw the cable and was told that, to the best of my knowledge, my memory is that the Director [Dulles], not the Deputy Director [Bissell] * * * had countermanded the cable and had directed that—had indicated that assassination was not to be considered." (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, p. 29)

The officer stated that he did not talk to either Dulles or Bissell about the countermanding cable, but that he did see the cable and in all likelihood heard of the reason for Dulles' reaction in discussions the same morning with his superior, the Chief of the Cuba project. (Duty Officer, 8/11/75, pp. 30-32)

That contact had been made with [the underworld], that a plan had been prepared for their use, and I think he either said in as many words or strongly inferred that the plan would be put into effect unless at that time or subsequently he was told by Mr. Dulles that it should not be." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 22)¹

The CIA's 1967 Inspector General's Report, based on interviews with Edwards and Bissell, said Dulles and Cabell were briefed as follows:

The discussion was circumspect. Edwards deliberately avoided the use of any "bad words." The descriptive term used was "an intelligence operation." Edwards is quite sure that the DCI and the DDCI clearly understood the nature of the operation he was discussing. He recalls describing the channel as being "from A to B to C." As he then envisioned it, A was Maheu, B was Rosselli, and C was the principal in Cuba. Edwards recalls that Mr. Dulles merely nodded, presumably in understanding and approval. Certainly there was no opposition. Edwards states that, while there was no formal approval as such, he felt that he clearly had tacit approval to use his own judgment. (I.G. Report, pp. 17-18)

Bissell testified that the description sounded "highly plausible." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 24) Edwards said it was "accurate." (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 11)

In light of the manner in which Bissell and Edwards described briefing Dulles, the question arises as to whether Dulles in fact would have understood that the operation involved assassination. The Inspector General, in attempting to "conjecture as to just what the Director did approve," decided:

It is safe to conclude, given the men participating and the general subject of the meeting, that there was little likelihood of misunderstanding—even though the details were deliberately blurred and the specific intended result was never stated to unmistakable language. It is also reasonable to conclude that the pointed avoidance of "bad words" emphasized to the participants the extreme sensitivity of the operation. (I.G. Report, p. 18)

Bissell testified that:

I can only say that I am quite sure I came away from that meeting—and there was, I think subsequent occasions when this came up between Mr. Dulles and myself, and I am quite convinced that he knew the nature of the operation.

Q. What were the subsequent conversations you had with Mr. Dulles in which you concluded that he knew that this was an assassination effort?

BISSELL. * * * It's really a guess on my part that such conversations occurred * * * I do believe they did occur in that during the entire autumn I suppose I must have spoken to Mr. Dulles practically daily about some aspect of the whole Cuban operation and I am virtually certain that he would in one or another of those conversations and probably more than once have asked if there was anything to report about the Sheffield Edwards' operation. He also may have been in direct contact with Edwards at that time. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 24-25)

When asked by the Chairman why, in this context, persons within the Agency talked "in riddles to one another," Bissell replied that:

* * * I think there was a reluctance to spread even on an oral record some aspects of this operation.

CHAIRMAN. Did the reluctance spring from the fact that it simply grated against your conscience to have to speak more explicitly?

BISSELL. I don't think it grated against my conscience. I think it may have been a feeling that the Director preferred the use of the sort of language that is described in the Inspector General's Report. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 25)

¹ Bissell testified that he was relying on the dating provided in the Inspector General's Report, but that his statements concerning what was said at the meeting were based on his unaided recollection. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 20-22)

Bissell, in a subsequent appearance before the Committee, again addressed the issue of whether he and Edwards had made it clear to Dulles that what was involved was an assassination operation:

I thought I made clear that it was my impression—and I believe the impression incidentally that I thought was confirmed in the [I.G. Report]—that in discussing this with Dulles and Cabell * * * the objective of the operation was made unmistakably clear to them. The terms "an intelligence operation," I think someone said, was that not a cover designation? But we would not under any circumstances have told Allen Dulles that this was an intelligence collection operation. If I said that on Monday, I must have given a wrong impression. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 24)

On the other hand, the only author of the Inspector General's Report still with the CIA testified that in his opinion a "pointed avoidance of 'bad words'" would have made it less likely that an "intelligence operation" would have been understood as an assassination attempt, and that "it was open to question how clearly this was stated to Mr. Dulles and whether or not Mr. Dulles understood." (Colby/I.G., 5/23/75, p. 10)

Sheffield Edwards was quite infirm when examined by the Committee and has since died.¹ Edwards testified before the Committee as follows:

* * * [T]his possible project was approved by Allen Dulles, Director of CIA, and by General Cabell, the Deputy Director. They are both dead.

The CHAIRMAN. How do you know, Colonel, that the project had been approved by these two gentlemen?

Edwards. I personally briefed Allen Dulles * * * and Cabell (Edwards, 5/30/75, pp. 5-6)

In his interview with the Rockefeller Commission, Edwards testified:

Q. Now, who inside the Agency besides Bissell did you have any contact with on the top echelon?

A. Very important. The plan was approved by Allen Dulles and General Cabell. (Edwards, Rockefeller Comm., 4/9/75, p. 5.)

The Support Chief who had been the case officer for the operation involving underworld figures testified that when he and Edwards discussed the matter in 1975, prior to giving evidence to the Rockefeller Commission, he was sure that Edwards had told him Dulles had approved the plot. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 58-59) He added that he was "reasonably sure" or "knew" in the "back of my mind" that either Edwards or Bissell had also told him of Dulles' knowledge when the plot was underway in 1960-62. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 33-34; 36; 60)²

A review of Dulles' calendar for August through December 1960 showed no meeting involving Dulles, Cabell, Bissell and Edwards.³ Of course, such a meeting could have occurred without having been noted on Dulles' calendar.

¹ As its investigation proceeded, the Committee sought to reexamine Edwards but he died before this could be accomplished. The Committee was unable to examine Edwards concerning either the claimed briefing of Dulles and Cabell, or his conflicting statements about Dulles in two memoranda. Those conflicting memoranda are set forth, *infra*, at p. 97-98.

² In June 1968, Howard J. Osborn, Edwards' successor as Director of Security, wrote a memorandum for Helms on the Las Vegas tap stating that "the DCI was briefed and gave his approval." When questioned about this memorandum, Osborn stated that he had no first-hand knowledge of the briefing, and that he had most likely obtained this statement from Edwards or the Support Chief.

³ The calendar also reflects no meetings during the period between Dulles, Edwards and Bissell, or between Dulles and Edwards.

(2) *Evidence Concerning When the Briefing Occurred.*—Bissell and the Inspector General's Report (which relied on Edwards) placed the briefing of Dulles in "the latter part of September 1960."

Bissell did not have a clear independent recollection of the dates involved, but recalled that discussions concerning the possible use of syndicate members against Castro began "in the autumn of 1960."¹ He recalled initial discussions among himself, Edwards, and Colonel J. C. King, Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, which he said occurred before Dulles and Cabell were approached about assassinating Castro. According to Bissell,

those conversations, the subject matter was a capability to eliminate Castro if such action should be decided upon.

It is, therefore, accurate to say that my best recollection of those conversations (with Edwards and King) is that they addressed themselves to the existence or non-existence of the capability. They were not conclusive or decisive conversations * * * nor would they have revealed a prior decision to implement such a plan by anybody. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 19)

The testimony regarding the dates during which assassination planning was undertaken was inexact, and the Committee cannot place those events precisely. According to the Inspector General's Report, the Support Chief contacted Rosselli in early September 1960, and during the week of September 25, the Chief, Maheu, and Rosselli met with Giancana and Trafficante in Miami. (I.G. Report, pp. 18-19) Bissell testified about the sequence of events:

Q. Well, before we came to the meeting [with Dulles], you had been informed prior to that, had you not, that contact had been made with the Mafia?

Mr. BISSELL. I had.

Q. Now were you informed that the Mafia had been given the go ahead to proceed with actual efforts to assassinate Castro?

BISSELL. Not that early, to my best recollection. I cannot date that at all well. I would suppose that it was within the next two or three weeks. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 20-21.)

On the other hand, Rosselli's testimony suggests that prior to the "latter part of September" 1960, Maheu had indicated that a large sum of money would be paid for Castro's death. (Rosselli, 6/28/75 p. 17) And in a memorandum dated May 14, 1962, Edwards indicated that the briefing of "senior officials" took place after the money had been offered.

It is clear, then, that even if Dulles was informed about the use of underworld figures to assassinate Castro, subordinate agency officials had previously decided to take steps toward arranging for the killing of Castro, including discussing it with organized crime leaders.

(vi) *Edwards' Communications to the Justice Department in 1961 and 1962.*—As fully described *supra*, pp. 77-79, the FBI discovered in late 1960 that Maheu had been involved in an illegal wiretap in Las Vegas. In April 1961, Maheu told the FBI that the tap had been placed in connection with a CIA operation, and suggested that the FBI contact Edwards to verify this fact.

¹ Q. When did you first become aware of any plan or effort to assassinate Mr. Castro—
BISSELL. Well, I became aware of planning a contingency basis for such an operation.
My recollection is August * * *

Q. August of 1960?

BISSELL. '60, correct * * * but without reading [the I.G. Report], I would have remembered initial conversations early in the autumn of 1960. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 17-18)

An FBI report of a May 3, 1961 interview with Edwards (in which Edwards vaguely described the use of Giancana as relating to "clandestine efforts against the Castro Government" with no mention of assassination, and a copy of which was given to the Attorney General) stated:

Col. Edwards advised that only Mr. Bissell (Director of Plans, CIA) and two others in CIA were aware of the Giancana-Maheu activity in behalf of CIA's program and Allen Dulles was completely unaware of Edwards' contact with Maheu in this connection. He added that Mr. Bissell, in his recent briefings of Gen. Taylor and the Attorney General in connection with their inquiries into CIA relating to the Cuban situation, told the Attorney General that some of the associated planning included the use of Giancana and the underworld against Castro. (FBI memorandum entitled, "Arthur James Balletti, et al.," May 22, 1961) (Emphasis added.)

Bissell said he was certain, however, that the statement regarding Dulles' knowledge about the operation was wrong, and testified:

Now it (the FBI memorandum) is just flatly contrary to my recollection that Allen Dulles was unaware of these contacts, as I have testified several times. Also, I submit it is quite implausible that I would have briefed General Taylor and the Attorney General—and incidentally, I have no recollection of briefing those two gentlemen except as members of the Board of Inquiry that I have described, of which Allen Dulles himself was a member—it is quite implausible that I would have briefed them on a matter which had been going on for some months, and about which the Director, Mr. Dulles himself, had never been informed. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 27)

When asked to speculate on why Edwards would have told the FBI that Dulles was unaware of Edwards' contact with Maheu, Bissell replied:

I can only surmise that he believed he could secure the cooperation of the Justice Department that he required without in any way involving his superior, Mr. Dulles, and simply did this in a protective fashion. (Bissell, 7/17/75, p. 20)

A year later, on May 7, 1962, Edwards and CIA's General Counsel met with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. (That meeting is discussed extensively below at p. 131 et seq.) Edwards' memorandum of the meeting indicated that he had said that after Rosselli and Giancana had been offered \$150,000, Edwards had "then briefed the proper senior officials of [the] Agency" (without specifying whom) and they had "duly orally approved."¹ It further states that "knowledge" of the project had been "kept to a total of six persons."²

Dulles had left the Agency before the time of Edwards' second statement.

(*vi*) *General Cabell's Remarks to the Special Group in November 1960.*—Bissell and Edwards testified that Cabell was aware of the Castro plots (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 22; Edwards, 5/30/75, pp. 5-6)³

¹ On the same day he wrote the memorandum for the Attorney General, Edwards wrote another memorandum for his own files indicating that after putting Harvey in contact with Rosselli in early April, he had "cautioned him [Harvey] that I felt that any future projects of this nature should have the tacit approval of the Director of Central Intelligence." (5/14/62. Memorandum for the Record) This memorandum, which contained other information which Harvey and Edwards had agreed to include to "falsify" the record, is discussed *infra*, p. 134.

² The 1967 Inspector General's Report surmised that thirteen people knew of the plot, including Dulles, based upon Bissell's and Edwards' account of the Dulles briefing.

³ The Inspector General's Report stated, "With Bissell present, Edwards briefed the Director (Dulles) and the DDCI (Cabell) on the existence of a plan involving members of the syndicate. . . . Edwards is quite sure that the DCI and the DDCI clearly understood the nature of the operation he was discussing." (I.G. Report, p. 17)

The Support Chief testified that prior to the Support Chief's testifying before the Rockefeller Commission, Edwards told him that Cabell had been aware of and authorized the project. (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 64)

The evidence indicates that the meeting between Dulles, Bissell, Edwards, and Cabell occurred sometime "in the autumn" of 1960, probably in late September. The minutes of a meeting of the Special Group on November 3, 1960, reflect the following remarks:

Finally, Mr. [Livingston] Merchant [Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs] asked whether any real planning had been done for taking direct positive action against Fidel, Raul and Che Guevara. He said that without these three the Cuban Government would be leaderless and probably brainless. He conceded that it would be necessary to act against all three simultaneously. General Cabell pointed out that action of this kind is uncertain of results and highly dangerous in conception and execution, because the instruments must be Cubans. He felt that, particularly because of the necessity of simultaneous action, it would have to be concluded that Mr. Merchant's suggestion is beyond our capabilities. (Special Group Minutes, 11/3/60)

Exactly what the term "direct positive action" meant to the speaker or those listening is uncertain. Merchant was ill and unable to testify; others present at the meeting could not recall what the words meant at the time they were uttered, although some have testified that they could refer to assassination.¹

Bissell was also asked about the minutes of the November 3 meeting. After reading the reference to "direct positive action," Bissell said, "I find it difficult to understand." (Bissell, 7/17/75, p. 18) He then was asked,

Q. Do you, in light of the November 3 minutes remain firm that Cabell was knowledgeable (of the assassination plots)?

A. It casts some doubt on that in my mind.

When asked if it cast "some significant doubt in light of (Cabell's) character," Bissell answered, "Yes." (Bissell, 7/17/75, pp. 22-23)

(c) *Did John McCone Know of or Authorize Assassination Plots During His Tenure as DCI?*

The CIA considered several assassination plots against Castro during McCone's tenure as Director. Harvey initiated his contact with Rosselli in April 1962, and that operation continued into early 1963. In early 1963 the CIA looked into the possibility of assassinating Castro with an exploding seashell and contaminated diving suit. AM/LASH was offered a poison pen device in November 1963, and caches of arms were delivered to Cuba for his use in the following years.

(i) *McCone's testimony.*—McCone testified that he was not aware of the plots to assassinate Castro which took place during the years in which he was DCI, and that he did not authorize those plots. (McCone, 6/6/75, pp. 33, 44-45)² He testified that he was not briefed about the assassination plots by Dulles, Bissell, Helms, or anyone else when he succeeded Dulles as Director in November 1961 (McCone, 6/6/75, pp.

¹Q. Do you read . . . direct, positive action . . . as meaning killing (Fidel Castro, Raul Castro and Che Guevara)?

"A. I would read it that way, yes. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 103)

"Q. . . . would you agree that the words 'direct positive action' appear to question whether there's been any planning in connection with assassinating (the Castros and Guevara)?

"A. I think the phrase 'positive action' could include assassinations, but . . . I'm not sure what was in Mr. Merchant's mind." (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 9.)

²McCone testified that he first learned of the Rosselli operation in August 1963, long after it had been terminated. See discussion *infra*, pp. 107-108.

6-7, 17), and that if he had ever been asked about the plots, he would have disapproved. McCone testified:

I had no knowledge of any authorized plan or planning that might lead to a request for authorization. Of course, during those days it was almost common for one person or another to say, "we ought to dispose of Castro" * * * [b]ut at no time did anyone come to me, or come to other authorities to my knowledge, with a plan for the actual undertaking of an assassination. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 3)

McCone also testified:

Senator Hart of Colorado: Did you ever discuss the subject of assassinations with your predecessor, Mr. Dulles?

McCone: No, I did not.¹

(ii) *Testimony of Helms, Bissell, and other Subordinate Agency Employees.*—Bissell was DDP under McCone for three months, from November 1961 until February 1962. Helms assumed the duties of DDP from Bissell and served throughout the balance of McCone's terms as Director.

Bissell testified about McCone's knowledge as follows:

Q. Your testimony is that you never discussed assassinations with Mr. McCone?

A. That is correct.

Q. * * * [D]id you tell McCone anything about that conversation with Mr. Harvey in which you at least told him to take over the relationship with the criminal syndicate?

A. I don't remember so doing. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 19)

Helms testified that he did not recall ever having discussed the assassination plots with McCone while the plots were continuing.² When asked whether McCone was aware of the assassination plots against Castro, Helms testified:

No, it isn't my impression that I told him, at least I don't have any impression, unfortunately * * *. Mr. McCone is an honorable man. He has done his own testifying, and all I can say is that I do not know specifically whether he was aware or not. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 90, 101-102)

Helms further testified:

Senator MONDALE. I believe Mr. McCone testified that he never heard of any of these attempts when he was Director. Would you have any reason to disagree with his testimony?

HELMS. Sir, I have always liked McCone and I don't want to get into an altercation with him. He had access to Harvey and everybody else just the way I had and he had regular access to the Attorney General.

* * * * *

Senator MONDALE. If you were a member of this Committee wouldn't you assume that Mr. McCone was unaware of the assassination attempts while they were underway?

HELMS. I don't know how to answer that, Senator Mondale. He was involved in this up to his scuppers just the way everybody else was that was in it, and I just don't know. I have no reason to impugn his integrity. On the other hand,

¹ Walt Elder, McCone's Executive Assistant, testified that Dulles gave McCone from ten to twelve informal briefings between September and November 1961. He also said that Dulles and McCone travelled together on a briefing trip to Europe to enable McCone to get "up to speed" on CIA activities. (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 13)

² Helms testified that he first informed McCone about the plot using underworld figures in August 1963. See discussion *supra* at p. 107.

I don't understand how it was he didn't hear about some of these things that he claims that he didn't. (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 32-33)

* * * * *

HELMS. I honestly didn't recall that Mr. McCone was not informed and when I was told that there was evidence that he wasn't informed, I was trying to scratch my head as to why I didn't tell him at the time and my surmises are the best I can come up with. I am really surprised I did not discuss it with him at the time. My relations with him were good, and so my surmises are just the best I am able to do in 1975 over an episode that took place that many years ago. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 90)

Several other Agency officials who were aware of the assassination plots testified that they had not told McCone of the plots. William Harvey testified that he never spoke with McCone about the operation involving underworld figures or assassination and that, to the best of his knowledge, McCone had not been told about the project. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 66)

Sheffield Edwards, when asked whether he had informed McCone about the plot, replied:

EDWARDS. No, I did not inform Mr. McCone.

Q. Was there a reason for why you did not inform Mr. McCone?

EDWARDS. Well, I did not want to drag Mr. McCone into this thing that in my opinion had petered out, and I did not want to involve him. (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 18)

The Support Chief who had been the case officer for the operation under Edwards, testified that he recalled that Edwards had told him during a discussion about the plots in 1965 that Edwards had not briefed McCone on the operation.

As a matter of fact, I don't think he ever knew about it. From later conversations with Colonel Edwards, not recently, we talked about it, and he said that he was convinced that Mr. McCone never knew about it, it wasn't on his watch, so to speak, and he didn't want to get him involved. (O.C., 5/30/75, pp. 37, 39)

George McManus, Helms' Special Assistant for Cuba during the relevant period, testified that he had not been told about the assassination activities, and gave his opinion that if McCone had been asked to approve an assassination, he "would have reacted violently, immediately."¹

Walter Elder, McCone's Executive Assistant, testified that he had not known of the underworld operation until August 1963, after it had been terminated, and that in his opinion McCone did not learn of the operation prior to that time. (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 15)²

With respect to the Cuban assassination matters, where his knowledge was only secondhand, William Colby said "Mr. McCone did not know of it." (Colby, 5/21/75, p. 101)

¹ McManus advanced two reasons for this opinion: (1) "McCone had a great love for the President of the United States and he sort of looked at him as an older son or a brother, a very protective sense he had about the President, President Kennedy, and McCone would have immediately said Jesus, this is a no win ball game."

(2) "Second, as an individual, he would have found it morally reprehensible." (McManus, 7/22/75, p. 33)

McManus also testified: "I always assumed that Mr. Helms would keep the Director fully informed of any activity that he thought was sensitive. * * * Under most circumstances, and indeed under all circumstances you can imagine, Helms would have told McCone, with the exception of a situation in which Helms had been told by higher authority not to tell him." (McManus, pp. 32-34)

McManus told the Committee that he had had no knowledge of the assassination plots prior to reading about them in the newspaper. However, the Inspector General's Report stated in 1967 that McManus was aware of such plots. (I.G. Report, pp. 75-76)

² In August 1963 Helms gave McCone a copy of Edwards' May 14, 1962 memorandum to the Attorney General. See discussion *infra* at p. 107.

(iii) *Helms and Harvey Did Not Brief McCone About the Assassination Plots.*—McCone assumed the position of DCI in November 1961. It was also in November 1961 that Bissell asked Harvey to assume operational control over the Castro plot involving underworld figures. Richard Helms replaced Bissell in February of 1962 and was subsequently briefed by Harvey on the existence of the assassination plots. Helms was Harvey's immediate superior and the person to whom he reported about the Castro plot activities.

Harvey testified that in the spring of 1962, when he was preparing to contact Rosselli:

* * * I briefed Helms generally on the takeover of Rosselli, on the doubts about the operation, on the possible * * * future of it, and to the extent it had then been possible, the assessment of Rosselli and the cutting out of various individuals. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 65)¹

Harvey testified that after so informing Helms

[T]here was a fairly detailed discussion between myself and Helms as to whether or not the Director should at that time be briefed concerning this. For a variety of reasons which were tossed back and forth, we agreed that it was not necessary or advisable to brief him at that time.

I then said, as I recall, to Mr. Helms, if you decide in the future that he should be briefed, I would like to know about it in advance to which, to my best recollection, he agreed. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 66)

Harvey offered the following explanation for why he and Helms had decided not to discuss the matter with McCone at that time:

There were several reasons for this. One, this operation at that stage had not been assessed. It was obviously questionable on several grounds. It obviously involved knowledge by too many people. We were not even sure at that point it had any remote possibility or rather any real possibility for success. It had arisen with full authority insofar as either of us knew long before I knew anything about it, and before the then-Director became Director of the Agency.

I saw no reason at that time to charge him with knowledge of this, at least until we reached the point where it appeared it might come to fruition or had a chance to assess the individuals involved and determine exactly the problem we faced, including the possible problem—and it was a very, or it appeared to be, and in my opinion was, at that time, a very real possibility of this government being blackmailed either by Cubans for political purposes or by figures in organized crime for their own self-protection or aggrandizement, which, as it turned out, did not happen, but at that time was a very pregnant possibility. (Harvey, 6/25/75, pp. 67-68)

I am definitely not saying that there was any effort to hide or conceal any information from the Director. There was not. This was a discussion as to whether or not it was even necessary or appropriate at this point to take details of this particular operation in an unassessed form to the then-Director at that time. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 69)

Harvey stated that he did not have any reason to believe that the assassination activities would have been "disapproved by the Director" had McCone been advised of the project. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 69) Harvey said that he had thought the plots "were completely authorized at every appropriate level within and beyond the Agency." (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 66) When asked why McCone had not been given an opportunity to consider the plot, Harvey replied:

¹ Harvey testified that when he took over the Rosselli operation, he had "cut out" both Mahen and Giancana because "regardless of what I may have thought of their trustworthiness * * * they were surplus to the operation." (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 65)

One of the things that I don't know from my own * * * knowledge * * * is who was briefed in exactly what terms at the time of the so called Las Vegas flop that involved attempts to place a technical surveillance * * * in the Las Vegas hotel room. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 46)

Harvey was queried on whether the reasons he had given for not briefing McCone were actually "reasons why he should [have been] briefed forthwith." Harvey replied:

Well, Senator Huddleston, it will be quite easy in looking at it now to say, well I can see your argument. All I can say to you in answer is at that time I didn't feel that it was necessary or advisable. I did not make this decision except in consultation, and had I been disagreed with, that would have been it. And I am not off-loading this on Richard Helms or attempting to at all. It isn't all that easy for me to go back this many years and sort of recast all of the reasoning and be sure I am accurate. And I don't also want to evade it by saying, well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. But actually it did. In other words, this was not something that either Helms or myself felt that at that stage there was any point in attempting to brief the Director on it until, at least, we had a somewhat better handle on it * * *. (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 67-68)

* * * * *

And I might also add, if I may, * * * as far as either one of us knew at that point he [McCone] might have been or should have been briefed, if you want it that way, by either Allen Dulles or Richard Bissell. (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 67-71)

The 1967 report, prepared by the Inspector General for Helms, states that Harvey said: "When he briefed Helms on Rosselli, he obtained Helms' approval not to brief the Director." (I.G. Report, p. 41)

Helms testified that he did not recall this conversation, but that he had no reason to doubt the accuracy of Harvey's testimony and the Inspector General's Report. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 32, 106)

Helms, when asked about Harvey's testimony that he and Harvey had agreed not to brief McCone, stated "I frankly don't recall having agreed to this."

My recollection is that I had very grave doubts about the wisdom of this * * *. And as I recall it, we had so few assets inside Cuba at that time that I was willing to try almost anything. But the thing did not loom large in my mind at that time. I was enormously busy with a lot of other things, taking over a new job [as DDP]. Mr. McCone was relatively new in the Agency and I guess I must have thought to myself, well this is going to look peculiar to him and I doubt very much this is going to go anyplace, but if it does, then that is time enough to bring him into the picture. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 33)

Helms also stated:

It was a Mafia connection and Mr. McCone was relatively new to the organization and this was, you know, not a very savory effort. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 92)

Helms later testified that he did not "recall ever having been convinced that any attempt was really made on Castro's life."

He said:

I am having a very difficult time justifying before this Committee, because there is something in here that doesn't come together, even for me, I am sorry to say. Because if this was all that clear, as everybody seems to think it was, that there were those pills in that restaurant in Cuba and Castro was about to die, I certainly would have talked to McCone about it. And this never was that clear, I am sorry to say, but it never was, not at that time. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 34)

On May 7, 1962, Edwards and the CIA's General Counsel, Lawrence Houston, briefed Attorney General Robert Kennedy on the operation involving underworld figures, describing it as terminated.¹

Harvey told the Inspector General that:

*** on 14 May he briefed Helms on the meeting with the Attorney General, as told to him by Edwards. Harvey, too, advised against briefing Mr. McCone and General Carter and states that Helms concurred in this. (I.G. Report, p. 65)

Harvey testified that he had probably told Helms:

Any briefing of the Director on the discussion with the Attorney General concerning this should come from Colonel Edwards and Larry Houston, the General Counsel, and not from the DDP unless we are asked. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 99)

Helms testified that he did not recall this conversation and remarked:

It seems odd to me only because, if the Attorney General had been briefed on something it would seem very logical that it would be very important to brief the Director at that time on the same thing. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 107)

Harvey supplied poison pills and weapons to Rosselli and his Cuban associates during a trip to Miami in late April 1962.² At a Special Group meeting on April 26, General Taylor requested that Harvey "attend the next meeting and report on agent activities." (Memo from McCone, 4/27/62) On April 26, Harvey was sent a memorandum informing him of General Taylor's request and McCone's wish to meet with Harvey and Lansdale "immediately on your return to discuss the Task Force Activities." (Memo, Elder to Harvey, 4/27/72)

Harvey testified that upon his return, he reported to the Special Group on the "status of the active and potential sources inside Cuba * * *":

Q. Did you report on the passage of the pills to Rosselli?

HARVEY. No, I did not.

Q. Which you had just accomplished in Miami * * * for the purpose of assassinating Fidel Castro.

HARVEY. No.

Q. And did you report that to Mr. McCone when he asked you to tell him what you had done in Miami?

HARVEY. No, I did not. (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 16-17)

Harvey stated that he did not tell McCone or the Special Group about the operation at that time because:

I did not consider either, (a) that this should be in any sense in this amorphous stage, surfaced to the Special Group, nor, as I have attempted to explain before that it should be briefed to John McCone at that point in the state that it was

¹ The briefing is described *supra* at p. 131.

According to the Inspector General's Report, Harvey and Rosselli had a farewell dinner before Harvey went on another assignment in June 1963. The meeting was observed by the FBI, and Sam Papich, the FBI liaison with the CIA, notified Harvey that FBI Director Hoover would be informed. Harvey asked Papich to call him if he felt that Hoover would inform the Director about the incident.

"Harvey said that he then told Mr. Helms of the incident and that Helms agreed that there was no need to brief McCone unless a call from Hoover was expected." (I.G. Report, p. 54)

² Harvey described the trip to Miami as: "one of a number of periodic trips for the purpose of reviewing in toto * * * the actual and potential operations at the Miami base * * * and this covered the whole gamut from personnel administration, operational support in the way of small craft (and) so on * * *" (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 15-16)

in with as little as we knew about it, and with all of the attendant background which at that point, and I was not personally cognizant of all of this, had been going on for approximately, as I recall, two to two-and-a-half years. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 18)

Harvey attended an August 10, 1962 meeting of the Special Group Augmented.¹ He testified that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suggested at that meeting that the Special Group "consider the elimination or assassination of Fidel." (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 30) Harvey said that on the day following this Special Group meeting.

In connection with a morning briefing of John McCone, the question again came up and I expressed some opinion as to the inappropriateness of this having been raised in this form and at that forum [Special Group meeting], at which point Mr. McCone stated in substance that he agreed and also that he had felt so strongly that he had, I believe, the preceding afternoon or evening, personally called the gentleman who made the proposal or suggestion and had stated similar views as to the inappropriateness and that he [McCone] said in addition * * * if I got myself involved in something like this, I might end up getting myself excommunicated. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 71)

Harvey stated that he did not tell McCone on that occasion about the actual assassination operation involving Rosselli.

I would like to recast the time that this took place. This was August of '62. This was at the start of the so-called Missile Crisis * * *.

A tentative decision had been made at that point that the only sensible thing to do with [the Rosselli operation] was to terminate it as rapidly and cleanly as it could be done * * * I am sure that I had discussed with Rosselli, at least on a tentative basis, by August, the probable necessity of terminating this * * *.

According to the Inspector General's Report, the "medicine" was reported to be still in Cuba at this time. (I.G. Report, pp. 51-52) Harvey testified that the report was referring to the poison pills. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 105)²

In relation to the August 10 meeting, Helms was asked whether he believed McCone would have stopped an assassination attempt if he had known that one was underway. Helms stated:

HELMS. The reason I say I don't know * * * is that elsewhere Mr. McCone states that he went to see Mr. McNamara in connection with this August 1962 affair and told Mr. McNamara that he wouldn't have anything to do with this, that I have no recollection, that I don't believe he ever said anything to me about his not wanting to have anything to do with it.

Q. And you were close to Mr. McCone in that period? You are his Deputy for Plans?

HELMS. I saw him almost daily.

Q. And is it your belief that if he had made any such statement to Mr. McNamara that he would have come to you and told you about it at some point?

HELMS. I just don't know why he didn't but I don't recall any such statement. As I said, and I would like to repeat it, Mr. McCone had given me my job, he had promoted me, I felt close to him, I felt loyal to him, and I would not have violated an instruction he gave me if I could have possibly helped it.

Q. But in any event, it is your judgment that he did not indicate that he was opposed to assassinations?

HELMS. Not to me.

¹ This meeting and the raising of the suggestion of assassination is discussed in depth at pages 161-169.

² Harvey said: "I may have deferred for a period of a few weeks giving an actual order to terminate this as soon as possible * * *" (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 74)

Walter Elder, McCone's Executive Assistant, testified, however, that he had personally told Helms of McCone's opposition to assassination after the August 10 meeting.¹

(iv) *The Question of Whether General Carter, McCone's Deputy Director, Learned About the Underworld Plot and Inform'd McCone.*—As fully described in other sections of this report, the fact that Giancana and Rosselli had been involved in a CIA operation directed against Cuba was brought to the attention of the FBI sometime in mid-1961, although the FBI was not told that the objective of the operation had been to assassinate Castro. The CIA opposed prosecution of Giancana and Rosselli for their involvement in the Las Vegas wiretap because of a concern that the Agency's association with them might be revealed. In the course of communications between the CIA and law enforcement agencies, CIA's general counsel, Lawrence Houston, wrote in a memorandum dated April 26, 1962:

I * * * briefed the DDCI in view of the possibility that the Attorney General might call him or the Director in the case. General Carter understood the situation and said in due time we might brief the Director. (Memo, Houston to Edwards, 4/26/62)

The Attorney General was subsequently briefed by Houston and Sheffield Edwards; a memorandum of that meeting written by Edwards states that the Attorney General was told that the operation had been terminated.

The Inspector General's Report inquired into precisely what Houston had told Carter and concluded:

Edwards states that the briefing of the Attorney General and the forwarding of a memorandum of record was carried out without briefing the Director (John McCone), the DDCI (General Carter), or the DDP (Richard Helms). He felt that, since they had not been privy to the operation when it was underway, they should be protected from involvement in it after the fact. Houston had briefed the DDCI on the fact that there was a matter involving the Department of Justice, but Houston had not given the DDCI the specifics. He feels it would have been normal for him to have briefed the DCI in view of the Attorney General's interest, but he also feels quite sure that he would have remembered doing it and does not. He suggested that Edwards' deliberate avoidance of such briefings may have led him also to avoid making any briefings. He recalls no disagreements with Edwards on this point and concludes that he must have accepted Edwards' decision not to brief. (I. G. Report, pp. 63-64)

When testifying before the Committee, Houston could not recall whether he had told Carter that the operation had involved assassination. (Houston, 6/17/75, p. 16) Houston testified that he had learned from Edwards "within a matter of days before we went to see the Attorney General," that the purpose of the operation had been to assassinate Castro. (Houston, 6/17/75, p. 6) Since Houston's discussion with Carter took place, at the earliest, nearly two weeks prior to

¹ Elder told the Committee:

"I told Mr. Helms that Mr. McCone had expressed his feeling * * * that assassination could not be condoned and would not be approved. Furthermore, I conveyed Mr. McCone's statement that it would be unthinkable to record in writing any consideration of assassination because it left the impression that the subject had received serious consideration by governmental policy makers, which it had not. Mr. Helms responded, 'I understand.' The point is that I made Mr. Helms aware of the strength of Mr. McCone's opposition to assassination. I know that Mr. Helms could not have been under any misapprehension about Mr. McCone's feeling after this conversation." (Elder Affidavit)

Helms, after reading Elder's affidavit, testified: "I do not have any recollection of such a conversation * * * let me say that in not recalling this conversation, I very seriously doubt that it ever took place." (Helms, 9/16/75, pp. 16, 19)

the Attorney General's briefing,¹ it is possible that he did not know at the time of that conversation that assassination was involved.

General Marshall S. Carter was appointed Deputy Director of the CIA in mid-April 1962. When shown the Houston memorandum by the Committee, Carter testified that he did not recall the meeting with Houston, that he had not been told about the assassination plot during his tenure in the Agency, and that he had never briefed McCone on either the assassination plot or the CIA's use of Giancana and Rosselli. (Carter, 9/19/75, pp. 61, 63)

After reading the sentence of Houston's memorandum stating that Carter had said "in due time we might brief the Director," Carter testified "it is surely contrary to every operational procedure that I've ever followed." (Carter, 9/19/75, p. 61)² When asked to explain what might have occurred, he testified:

Memorandums for the record have very little validity in fact. When you sit down after the fact and write it down, as I say, he could have very easily have come to me and said this is the kind of problem we're faced with. We've had it before. I think you ought to know that we're asking the Department of Justice not to prosecute this character because he's been trying to do a job for us. I think under those circumstances, if it were presented in that way, then I might very well have said, well, you know what you're doing, it's your balliwick, you've done it before, go ahead and do it. (Carter, 9/19/75, p. 67)

(v) *The August 1963 Briefing of McCone.*—An August 16, 1963, *Chicago Sun Times* article claimed that the CIA had had a connection with Giancana.³ McCone asked Helms for a report about the article. McCone testified that when Helms came to see him, he brought the following memorandum:

1. Attached is the only copy in the Agency of a memorandum on subject, the ribbon copy of which was sent to the Attorney General in May of 1962. I was vaguely aware of the existence of such a memorandum since I was informed that it had been written as a result of a briefing given by Colonel Edwards and Lawrence Houston to the Attorney General in May of last year.

2. I spoke with Colonel Edwards on the telephone last evening, and, in the absence of Mr. Bannerman on leave, I was with Colonel Edwards' assistance able to locate this copy. As far as I am aware, this is the only written information available on Agency relationships with subject. I hope that this will serve your purpose.

3. I assume you are aware of the nature of the operation discussed in the attachment. (Memorandum to Director of Central Intelligence, re: Sam Giancana, from Helms, 8/16/63)⁴

Attached to Helms' memorandum to the DCI was the May 14, 1962, memorandum from Sheffield Edwards to the Attorney General which

¹The memorandum is dated April 26, 1962. The Attorney General was briefed on May 7.

²Carter further observed that, since he was new in the Agency at that time, he would have immediately brought the matter to the Director's attention if he had believed it was important and if it had been presented to him by Houston as requiring the Director's consideration. After reviewing other memoranda involved in the case, Carter testified that "this would have appeared to have been a matter that the staff, in the light of the past activities, had been well able to handle." (Carter, 9/19/75, p. 65)

³The 8/16/63 *Chicago Sun Times* article stated that "Justice Department sources" believed that Giancana never did any spying for the CIA, but pretended to go along with the Agency "in the hopes that the Justice Department's drive to put him behind bars might be slowed—or at least affected—by his ruse of cooperation with another government agency."

⁴When asked whether this entry in the memorandum suggested that he had previously been aware of the operation, McCone testified that Helms had orally informed him "on that day in August" that it involved assassination. (McCone, 6/8/75, p. 9)

described the operation as having been terminated *before* McCone became DCI. (See discussion, *infra*, p. 132.)

Neither McCone nor Helms was able to remember what precisely was said at the meeting. Walter Elder, who was then McCone's Executive Assistant, recalled:

Mr. Helms came in with [the memorandum]. He handed it to [McCone] who read it and * * * handed it back without any particular comment other than to say, "Well, this did not happen during my tenure."

* * * * *

Q. Was anything else said?

A. No, he had very little to say about it.

Q. Did Mr. Helms then leave?

A. Mr. Helms left. (Elder, 8/13/75, pp. 16-17, 58)

Elder testified that he had concluded that the operation involved assassination from reading the two memoranda that were given to McCone. (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 60) Elder "further concluded that [McCone] was perfectly aware of what Mr. Helms was trying to say to him." (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 60) Elder further testified:

Q. Other than that conversation that you just described between yourself and Mr. McCone, did he have anything else to say about that memorandum?

Mr. ELDER. No.

Q. I take it then he did not tell either you or Mr. Helms that we absolutely could not have this activity going on in the future?

Mr. ELDER. No. (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 61)

McCone testified that he could not recall whether Helms had told him that the operation referred to in the memorandum had involved assassination, but he did remember that the part of the memorandum stating that \$150,000 was to be paid to the principals on completion of the operation had indicated to him when he first saw the memorandum that the aim of the project had been to assassinate Castro. (McCone, 10/9/75, pp. 35-36)

The Inspector General's Report concluded that:

This is the earliest date on which we have evidence of Mr. McCone's being aware of any aspect of the scheme to assassinate Castro using members of the gambling syndicate. (I.G. Report, p. 70)

3. AT WHAT LEVEL WERE THE CASTRO PLOTS AUTHORIZED OR KNOWN ABOUT OUTSIDE OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY?

The ensuing section sets forth evidence bearing on whether officials outside the CIA in either the Eisenhower, Kennedy, or Johnson Administrations knew about or authorized the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro. The reader is reminded that the early phases of the assassination effort against Castro occurred during the same time as the plot to assassinate Patrice Lumumba (August 1960 through January 1961) and the CIA's involvement with dissidents bent on assassinating Raphael Trujillo (February 1960 through May 1961). The evidence discussed here must be read in conjunction with evidence relating to those other plots to fully understand the authorization and knowledge issues and the milieu within which the various plots occurred.

The first part of this section reviews evidence relating to whether officials of the Eisenhower Administration were aware of or authorized the assassination efforts against Castro undertaken by the CIA

during that time—the abortive 1960 “accident” plot and the initiation of the plot involving underworld figures. The second part of this section examines evidence relating to whether officials of the Kennedy Administration were aware of or authorized the continuation of the plot involving the underworld and sending poison to Cuba prior to the Bay of Pigs. Also considered in that part is evidence bearing on events which occurred after the Bay of Pigs that sheds light on whether Kennedy Administration officials subsequently learned of that attempt. The third part of this section examines evidence relating to whether officials of the Kennedy Administration authorized or knew about the second attempt to assassinate Castro involving John Rosselli which began in April 1962. This part closely examines the Administration’s effort to overthrow the Castro regime—Operation MONGOOSE—for any bearing it might have on the perception of Agency officials that assassination was within the sphere of permissible activity.

The final parts examine evidence relating to whether the assassination activity during the last year of the Kennedy Administration and in the Johnson Administration—Operation AM/LASH—was authorized or known about by top Administration officials outside the CIA and whether that plot was consistent with general efforts sanctioned by the Administrations to overthrow Castro’s government.

(a) The Question of Knowledge and Authorization Outside The Central Intelligence Agency in The Eisenhower Administration

(i) Summary

The evidence as to whether Allen Dulles, CIA Director during the Eisenhower Administration, was informed of the Castro assassination operation is not clear.

Even assuming that Dulles was informed, authorization outside the CIA for a Castro assassination could, according to the testimony, only have come from President Eisenhower, from someone speaking for him, or from the Special Group. At issue, then is whether President Eisenhower, his close aides, or the Special Group authorized or had knowledge of the Castro assassination plots.

The Committee took testimony on this issue from Richard Bissell and from President Eisenhower’s principal staff assistants. In summary, the evidence was:

(a) Bissell testified that he did not inform the Special Group or President Eisenhower of the Castro assassination operation, and that he had no personal knowledge that Allen Dulles had informed either President Eisenhower or the Special Group. However, Bissell expressed the belief that Allen Dulles would have advised President Eisenhower (but not the Special Group) in a “circumlocutious” or “oblique” way. Bissell based this “pure personal opinion” on his understanding of Dulles’ practice regarding other particularly sensitive covert operations. But Bissell testified that Dulles never told him that he had so advised President Eisenhower about the Castro assassination operation, even though Dulles had told Bissell when he had employed this “circumlocutious” approach to the President on certain other occasions.

(b) Gordon Gray, Eisenhower's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs and the President's representative on the Special Group, testified that the Special Group never approved a Castro assassination, and that President Eisenhower had charged the Special Group with the responsibility of authorizing all important covert operations. A review of the records of Special Group meetings shows that a query concerning a plan to take "direct positive action" against Castro caused Allen Dulles' Deputy, General Cabell, to advise that such action was beyond the CIA's capability. Gray, Andrew Goodpaster (the President's staff secretary responsible for national security operational matters) and John Eisenhower (Assistant Staff Secretary) each stated that he believed that President Eisenhower would not have considered such a matter in a private meeting with Dulles, would not have approved Castro's assassination, and would not have discussed such a matter without telling him. Each concluded as a matter of opinion that President Eisenhower was never told, and each denied having heard anything about any assassination.

(c) In addition to the Inspector General's Report (which concluded that it could not say that any assassination activity carried on during this period was responsive to Administration pressure), the documentary evidence shows that Castro's removal was discussed at two meetings of the National Security Council and the Special Group in March 1960. The minutes of these meetings indicate that the discussions involved a general consideration of a proposal to train a Cuban exile force to invade Cuba and an assessment that Castro's overthrow might result in a Communist takeover. Gray and Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations from 1955 through 1961, testified that these discussions of Castro's removal did not refer to assassination, but rather to the problem of creating an anti-Castro exile force strong enough to ensure a non-Communist successor to the Castro regime. Apparently there was no assassination activity stemming directly from those meetings. Another Special Group document stated that planning for "direct positive action" against Cuban leaders was raised at a meeting in the Fall of 1960, shortly after Phase I of the CIA/underworld assassination operation was initiated. The DDCI told the Special Group, however, that such action was beyond the CIA's capability.

(ii) *Richard Bissell's Testimony*

(1) *Lack of Personal Knowledge*

Bissell testified that he knew nothing of authorization outside the CIA for the Castro assassination effort. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 30) Bissell testified that he met frequently with the Special Group in the fall of 1960 to discuss Cuban operations, but that he never informed the Special Group or any Administration official that there was a plot underway involving the use of underworld figures to assassinate Castro. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 25-29) Bissell said he did not do so because as Deputy Director of Plans, he reported to the Director, and under Agency procedures, relied on the Director to inform the appropriate persons outside the Agency.

(2) *Assumptions Concerning Dulles*

Based on his belief that Dulles had been briefed about the operation involving underworld figures and understood that it involved assassination, Bissell testified that:

I went on the assumption that, in a matter of this sensitivity, the Director would handle higher level clearances. By clearance, I mean authorization¹ (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 26)

Bissell stated that although he believed that Dulles "probably" talked with President Eisenhower:

the Mafia operation was not regarded as of enormous importance and there were much more important matters to talk about with the President. (Bissell, 7/17/75, p. 25)

Bissell testified that he was only "guessing" that Dulles had informed Eisenhower, and that the President had then given his authorization, "perhaps only tacitly." (Bissell, 7/17/75, pp. 38-39; 6/11/75, p. 6) Bissell said that this guess was "not based on hard evidence," but was "pure personal opinion" (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 61), derived from his knowledge of "command relationship, of Allen Dulles as an individual, and of his [Dulles'] mode of operations." (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 6)

Bissell emphasized, however:

I still want to be quite clear, I do not have any recollection of the Director telling me that on this specific operation he had made such an approach and received assent, approval, tacit or otherwise. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 11)

In describing the manner in which Dulles might have informed the President of the assassination plot involving underworld figures, Bissell said circumlocution would have been used "to protect the President" in accord with the concept of "plausible deniability."²

My guess is that indeed whoever informed him, that is Dulles directly or Dulles through a staff member, would have had the same desire . . . to shield the President and to shield him in the sense of intimating or making clear that something of the sort was going forward, but giving the President as little information about it as possible, and the purpose of it would have been to give the President an opportunity, if he so elected, to cancel it, to order it cancelled, or to allow it to continue but without, in effect, extracting from him an explicit endorsement of the detailed specific plan. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 61)

On other occasions involving sensitive covert operations, Bissell said that Dulles had used just such a "circumlocutious approach" with President Eisenhower. (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 10)

(iii) *Testimony of White House Officials*

(1) *Gordon Gray*

Gordon Gray served as President Eisenhower's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs from July 1958 to January 20, 1961. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 4) Gray was also the President's representative on

¹ Bissell reiterated this view in a subsequent appearance: " . . . I felt that the responsibility for obtaining necessary authorization should remain with the Director." (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 4)

² Bissell explained the "plausible deniability" practice as follows:

"Any covert operations, but especially covert operations . . . that if successful, would have very visible consequences, it was of course, an objective to carry out in such a way that they could be plausibly disclaimed by the U.S. Government." (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 5.) Bissell apparently assumed that a corollary to that doctrine required the use of "oblique," "circumlocutious" language.

the Special Group. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 4) President Eisenhower instructed Gray that all covert actions impinging on the sovereignty of other countries must be deliberated by the Special Group. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 6) Gray testified that from July 1958 to January 20, 1961, the Special Group never approved an action to assassinate Castro (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 6) and that no such suggestion was made by Bissell. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 37)

Gray testified that:

I find it very difficult to believe, and I do not believe, that Mr. Dulles would have gone independently to him [President Eisenhower] with such a proposal without, for that matter, my knowing about it from Mr. Dulles. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 35)¹

Gray further testified that his relationship with President Eisenhower was such that President Eisenhower "would discuss with me anything that came to his attention independently of me." (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 7) And Gray testified that President Eisenhower never discussed with him the subject of a Castro assassination or of the use of the underworld figures and Cubans in such an effort. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 7)

(2) *Andrew Goodpaster*

Goodpaster served as President Eisenhower's Staff Secretary and Defense Liaison Officer during the last two years of the Eisenhower Administration. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 3) In addition to responsibility for the President's schedule and supervision of the White House staff, Goodpaster was responsible for handling with the President "all matters of day to day operations" in the foreign affairs and national security field, including the activities of the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 3) Goodpaster testified that he had a "very close personal relationship" with President Eisenhower and saw the President "essentially every day when [President Eisenhower] was in Washington." (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 4) Gordon Gray and Goodpaster served as the channels between the CIA and the President, and Goodpaster had particular responsibility for "operations in which [President Eisenhower] might take a personal part." (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 4)

Goodpaster testified that he never heard any mention of assassination efforts. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 5) He said that President Eisenhower never told him about any assassination effort and that it was his belief, under White House procedures and by virtue of his close relationship with President Eisenhower, that if an assassination plan or operation had ever been raised with the President, he (Goodpaster) would have learned of it. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 5)

That was simply not the President's way of doing business. He had made it very clear to us how he wanted to handle matters of this kind, and we had set up procedures to see that they were then handled that way. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, pp. 6-7)

¹ Gray pointed out "that I was not with President Eisenhower twenty-four hours a day. It was a few minutes every day, practically every day." (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 35)

According to the records of the Eisenhower Library, Dulles was alone with President Eisenhower on one occasion in the fall of 1960. That meeting lasted ten minutes and occurred on November 25, 1960. The record of the previous portion of the meeting attended by Gray indicates only that, in addition to discussion of operations in another country, "there was also some discussion of Cuba." (Memorandum, November 28, 1960, by Gordon Gray, of Meeting with the President, November 25, 1960, at 10:40 a.m.)

General Goodpaster testified that he found Bissell's assumption of a "circumlocutious" personal conversation between Dulles and the President "completely unlikely."

According to Goodpaster, after the collapse of the Paris Summit Conference between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev as a result of the U-2 incident in the spring of 1960, the Eisenhower Administration reviewed its procedures for approval of CIA operations and tightened them. Goodpaster said that this review was carried out

with the aim in mind of being sure we had full and explicit understanding of any proposals that came to us and we knew from [President Eisenhower] that in doing that we were responsive to a desire on his part. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 7)

Goodpaster also said John Foster Dulles was a confidant of the President while Allen Dulles was not. (Goodpaster, 7/17/75, p. 8)

(3) *Thomas Parrott*

Thomas Parrott, a CIA officer, served as Secretary of the Special Group from 1957 until October 1963. (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 4) Parrott stated that by virtue of this assignment, he was Allen Dulles' assistant in the Special Group. He came to know Dulles well, and gained an understanding of the Director's method of expression and his practice in dealing with the President.¹ (Parrott, 7/10/75, pp. 13-14)

Parrott testified that early in 1959, President Eisenhower directed the Special Group to meet at least once a week to consider, approve, or reject all significant covert action operations. (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 4) He said that:

as evidenced in his * * * revitalization * * * of this Committee [the Special Group], [President Eisenhower was] highly conscious of the necessity to be protective * * * in this field, and I just cannot conceive that [President Eisenhower] would have gone off and mounted some kind of covert operation on his own. This certainly would not have been consistent with President Eisenhower's staff method of doing business * * *

(4) *John Eisenhower*

John Eisenhower was Goodpaster's Assistant Staff Secretary from mid-1958 to the end of his father's Administration. (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, pp. 5, 9) Eisenhower testified that his father had confided in him about secret matters "to a very large extent." (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 3) For example, he said that after the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, his father had told him that the United States had developed the atomic bomb (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 3) and that as early as 1956, President Eisenhower had told him of the secret U-2 flights. (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 4)

John Eisenhower said that President Eisenhower never told him of any CIA activity involving an assassination plan or attempt concerning Castro and it was his opinion that President Eisenhower would have told him if the President had known about such activity.

¹ Parrott testified:

"I saw him [Allen Dulles] several times a week for hours at a time. I had known him somewhat before . . . but I got to know him very well indeed during these four years." (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 13)

² Parrott further testified that Allen Dulles followed a practice of insisting upon specific orders rather than "tacit approval" and he also found Bissell's assumptions regarding a circumlocutious conversation between President Eisenhower and Allen Dulles "hard to believe." (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 14)

(Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 5) He also said that President Eisenhower did not discuss important subjects circumlocutiously. (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 8) He told the Committee that President Eisenhower believed that no leader was indispensable, and thus assassination was not an alternative in the conduct of foreign policy. (Eisenhower, 7/18/75, p. 14)

(iv) *Documentary Evidence*

(1) *The Inspector General's Report.*—The concluding section of the Inspector General's Report advanced several possible responses to Drew Pearson's public charges about CIA links with the underworld.¹ One question posed in the Inspector General's Report was: "Can CIA state or imply that it was merely an instrument of policy?" The answer given was:

Not in this case. While it is true that Phase Two (the attempt commencing in April 1962) was carried out in an atmosphere of intense Kennedy Administration pressure to do something about Castro, such is not true of the earlier phase. (I.G. Report, p. 132)

(2) *The Contemporaneous Documents.*—The Committee also examined records of the National Security Council, the Special Group, and other relevant White House files bearing on the question of authorization for the period from Castro's rise to power to the end of the Eisenhower Administration. Three documents were found which contained references arguably related to the subject of assassination.

In March 1960, the National Security Council and the Special Group focused on America's Cuban policy. President Eisenhower had just returned from a foreign trip in which:

Latin American Presidents had counseled further forbearance by the U.S. in the hope that the members of the Organization of American States would finally see the potential danger in Cuba and take concerted action. (Memorandum of March 10, 1960 NSC Meeting)

Castro was characterized as hostile, but his Communist ties were apparently then unclear.² The minutes of the March 10, 1960, NSC meeting stated:

There is no apparent alternative to the present government in the event Castro disappears. Indeed the result of Castro's disappearance might be a Communist takeover.

The general covert action plan against Cuba came out of these March 1960 meetings of the NSC and Special Group.³

The record of the NSC meeting of March 10, 1960 (at which President Eisenhower was present), states that Admiral Arleigh Burke, in commenting on Allen Dulles' statement that the Cuba covert action plan was in preparation, "suggested that any plan for the removal of Cuban leaders should be a package deal, since many of the Cuban leaders around Castro were even worse than Castro." According to the minutes of the Special Group meeting on March 14, 1960 (which

¹ On March 3, 1967, Drew Pearson stated in his newspaper column that there was a United States "plot" to assassinate Castro, and that "one version claims that underworld figures actually were recruited to carry out the plot." (Pearson, Washington *Merry Go-Round*, March 3, 1967)

² Castro apparently first announced publicly that he was a "Marxist-Lenist" on December 2, 1961. (David Larson, *Cuba Crisis of 1962*, p. 304)

³ As Gray testified, this plan covered four areas: sabotage, economic sanctions, propaganda, and training of a Cuban exile force for a possible invasion. Gray stated that this plan had nothing to do with assassination. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 17)

President Eisenhower did not attend), "there was a general discussion as to what would be the effect on the Cuban scene if Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara should disappear simultaneously."

Admiral Burke stated in an affidavit¹ that although he did not recall the March 10, 1960, NSC meeting, he did have a clear recollection of discussions of Cuba policy in the spring of 1960. (Burke affidavit)

Burke stated that the reference to his suggestion at the March 10 meeting "clearly refers to the general covert action plan reported by Allen Dulles at that meeting and to the general consideration given at that time in the U.S. Government to identify Cuban groups with which the U.S. might work to overthrow the Castro regime." (Burke affidavit) Burke continued:

In this connection, it was my view that the U.S. must support those Cuban groups who would have a sufficient power base among the Cuban people, not merely to overthrow Castro, but to be able to cope with and dismantle his organization as well. It was my firm belief at the time that many people in Castro's organization were Communist and that Castro was probably a Communist. I therefore advocated that any effort to support groups so as to achieve Castro's overthrow must focus, not merely on the leaders at the top of the Castro regime, but on the very strong organization that had been the key to Castro's rise to power, and was the basis for his power.

* * * * *

The question of a Castro assassination never arose at the March 10, 1960 NSC meeting or at any other meeting or discussion that I attended or in which I participated. It is my firm conviction based on five years of close association with President Eisenhower during my service as Chief of Naval Operations, that President Eisenhower would never have tolerated such a discussion, or have permitted anyone to propose assassination, nor would he have ever authorized, condoned, or permitted an assassination attempt. (Burke affidavit)

Gordon Gray testified that the March 10 and March 14, 1960 meetings dealt with plans to overthrow the Castro government, rather than with assassinating Castro. He said that Admiral Burke's comment at the March 10 NSC meeting was part of a lengthy and general discussion about Cuba. Burke's reference to a "package deal" for the removal of Cuban leaders was in direct response to a comment by Allen Dulles that "a plan to affect the situation in Cuba was being worked on." (Gray, 7/9/75, pp. 13-14) Gray said he believed that Dulles "was certainly referring to" the Eisenhower Administration's plan to train Cuban exiles for an invasion, rather than to a targeted attempt on Castro's life.² (Gray, 7/9/75, pp. 14, 45) Gray testified that viewing Burke's remarks in context, he believed it was clear that "Admiral Burke *** was expressing his opinion that if you have any plan [for the overthrow of Castro] it ought to take these factors into

¹ Admiral Burke was unable to testify in person because he was hospitalized.

² The memorandum of an internal CIA meeting shows that the first meeting of the CIA task force established to plan the training of a Cuban exile force was held on March 3, 1960, the day before the March 10, NSA meeting. The CIA task force discussed "an operation directed at the overthrow of the Castro regime" and described that operation as one in which a Cuban exile force would be trained for "6-7 months." In the discussion of this operation, it was noted that a principal problem was the weakness of the Cuban exile groups which "had no real leader and are divided into many parts," but it was hoped that during the long training period the "opposition groups will have been merged and will have formed a government-in-exile to which all trained elements could be attached." (Memorandum March 9, 1960)

According to the memorandum of the meeting, J. C. King, Chief of the CIA's Western Hemisphere Division, had stated, "unless Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara could be eliminated in one package—which is highly unlikely—this operation can be a long, drawn-out affair and the present government will only be overthrown by the use of force." (Id., p. 1)

consideration, that you might end up with a Communist government." (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 45)

Admiral Burke stated that the "general discussion" at the March 14 Special Group meeting "clearly did not involve a discussion of assassination of Cuban leaders, but to the possible effects should only those leaders be overthrown by a group not powerful enough to also master the organization those leaders had established in Cuba."¹ (Burke affidavit) Burke added:

Thus, it was consistent with my views then that I should have been recorded in the record of the March 14 meeting as warning in this discussion that the Communists might move into control even if these three top leaders should be overthrown. As stated above, I strongly believed that a strong, organized group must be in the forefront of any effort to overthrow the Castro government. (Burke affidavit)

When the question of "whether any real planning had been done for taking direct positive action against Fidel, Raul and Che Guevara" was subsequently raised at a Special Group meeting on November 3, 1960, General Cabell reportedly said:

that action of this kind is uncertain of results and highly dangerous in conception and execution, because the instruments must be Cubans. He felt that, particularly because of the necessity for simultaneous action, it would have to be concluded that (such action) is beyond our capabilities. (Minutes Special Group Meeting, November 3, 1960)

The reference to "direct positive action" is ambiguous and subject to different interpretations, including a suggestion that assassination be explored.²

However, it is clear that at most a question was being asked. Moreover, assuming that "direct positive action" meant killing, it is significant that shortly after assassination plots were begun, the CIA Deputy Director told the Special Group that such action was "beyond our capabilities."

(b) The Question of Knowledge and Authorization Outside The Central Intelligence Agency during the Kennedy Administration

We have divided the evidence on whether or not assassination plots were authorized during the Kennedy Administration into three sections. The first primarily relates to the assassination operation involving underworld figures prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. The second deals with the post-Bay of Pigs period, and

¹ The record of the March 14 meeting states: "Admiral Burke said that the organized group within Cuba today was the Communists and there was therefore the danger they might move into control."

² Testimony varied as to the meaning of the phrase "direct positive action" and of General Cabell's response in the November 3, 1960 memorandum.

Gray testified that it could be taken to include assassination, but he did not know whether Mr. Merchant intended to refer to assassination or not. (Gray, 7/9/75, p. 9)

Parrott, the author of the memorandum, testified that, although he had no recollection of the November 3, 1960 meeting, it was his opinion, based on the context of weekly Special Group meetings and discussion in the fall of 1960, that this discussion centered on the possibility of a palace coup, as opposed to a paramilitary operation mounted from outside Cuba; General Cabell was indicating that "we simply do not have agents inside of Cuba to carry out this kind" of a coup. (Parrott, 7/10/75, pp. 19-21) Parrott also testified that the phrase "direct positive action" was not a euphemism, and that he did not employ euphemisms in Special Group records, except for references to the President. (Parrott, 7/10/75, pp. 19-21)

Bissell testified that he found it "difficult to understand" that General Cabell would have told the Special Group that it was beyond the CIA's capabilities to take "direct positive action" (if that referred to assassination) in light of Bissell's assumption that General Cabell was informed of the CIA/underworld assassination effort. (Bissell, 7/17/75, pp. 15-18)

Mr. Merchant was unable to testify because of ill health and orders of his physician.

the Rosselli operation in the spring of 1962. That section also discusses Operation Mongoose. A third section discusses the 1963 laboratory schemes and the AM/LASH plot.

(i) *Pre-Bay Of Pigs Assassination Plot*

The testimony was essentially the same as for the Eisenhower Administration. Bissell again said he assumed and believed that Dulles had met with President Kennedy and informed him, in a circumlocutious fashion, that the operation had been planned and was being attempted. Bissell also testified that he (Bissell) informed neither the President nor any other officials outside the CIA about the assassination efforts. Each Kennedy Administration official who testified said that he had not known about or authorized the plots, and did not believe the President would have authorized an assassination.

(1) *Bissell's Testimony Concerning His Assumption That Dulles Told The President.*—Richard Bissell continued as DDP, the principal agency official responsible for efforts against the Castro regime, including both the Bay of Pigs operation and the assassination plots, when Kennedy became President in January, 1961. Bissell is the only surviving CIA policy maker with first hand knowledge of high-level decisions in the pre-Bay of Pigs phase of the Castro assassination plot involving underworld figures. Although Bissell testified that Allen Dulles never told him that Dulles had informed President Kennedy about the underworld plot, Bissell told the Committee that he believed Dulles had so informed President Kennedy and that the plot had accordingly been approved by the highest authority.¹

Senator BAKER. * * * you have no reason to think that he [Dulles] didn't or he did [brief the President]. But the question I put was whether or not in the ordinary course of the operations of the CIA as you know them under their traditions, their rules and regulations, and their policies in your opinion—was the President, President-elect briefed or was he not?

BISSELL. I believe at some stage the President and the President-elect both were advised that such an operation had been planned and was being attempted.

Senator BAKER. By whom?

BISSELL. I would guess through some channel by Allen Dulles.

The CHAIRMAN. But you're guessing, aren't you?

Mr. BISSELL. I am, Mr. Chairman, and I have said that I cannot recollect the giving of such briefing at the meeting with the President-elect in November or in any meeting with President Eisenhower. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 38-39)

Bissell characterized his belief that the President had been informed as "a pure personal opinion" (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 60-61); on another occasion the following exchange occurred:

Senator MORGAN. Mr. Bissell, it's a serious matter to attribute knowledge of this sort to the President of the United States, especially one who cannot speak for himself. Is it fair to assume that out of an abundance of caution you are simply telling us that you have no knowledge unless you are absolutely certain? * * * I gather that you think * * * it [assassination plot information] came out but because of the seriousness of the accusation you are just being extremely cautious * * * is that a fair assumption to make?

BISSELL. That is very close to a fair assumption, sir. It's just that I have no direct knowledge, first-hand knowledge of his [President Kennedy's] being advised, but my belief is that he knew of it [assassination plans]. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 55-56)

¹ Bissell never asked Dulles whether Dulles had informed President Kennedy's National Security Adviser, McGeorge Bundy about the plot. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 24.)

Bissell said that he had not personally informed White House officials or the President of the assassination plot because he "left the question of advising senior officials of the government and obtaining clearances in Allen Dulles' hands." (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 29, 33) As with President Eisenhower, Bissell once again "assumed" that Dulles "had at least intimated [to President Kennedy] that some such thing was underway." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 33)¹

Bissell speculated that Dulles would have engaged in a "circumlocutious" conversation using "rather general terms," although Dulles did not mention such a briefing to Bissell, as he had on some past occasions when he had circumlocutiously briefed President Eisenhower on sensitive matters. (Bissell, 6/11/75, pp. 6, 10-14)

Bissell repeatedly coupled Eisenhower and Kennedy when he speculated that the Presidents would have been advised in a manner calculated to maintain "plausible deniability." (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 38, 57; 6/11/75, pp. 5-6):

In the case of an operation of high sensitivity of the sort that we are discussing, there was a further objective that would have been pursued at various levels, and that was specifically with respect to the President, to protect the President. And, therefore, the way in which I believe that Allen Dulles would have attempted to do that was to have indicated to the two successive Presidents the general objective of the operation that was contemplated, to make that sufficiently clear so that the President—either President Eisenhower or President Kennedy—could have ordered the termination of the operation, but to give the President just as little information about it as possible beyond an understanding of its general purpose. Such an approach to the President would have had as its purpose to leave him in the position to deny knowledge of the operation if it should surface.

My belief—a belief based, as I have said, only to my knowledge of command relationship of Allen Dulles as an individual, and of his mode of operations—is that authorization was obtained by him in the manner that I have indicated. I used the word on Monday "circumlocutious," and it was to this approach that I referred.

Assuming for the moment that I am correct, since the effort would have been to minimize the possibility of embarrassment to the President, it is, I think, understandable that neither I nor anyone else in the Agency would have discussed this operation on our own initiative with, for instance, members of the White House staff.

The effort would have been to hold to the absolute minimum the number of people who knew that the President had been consulted, had been notified and had given, perhaps only tacitly, his authorization. (Bissell, 6/11/75, pp. 5-6)

(2) *Bissell's Testimony Regarding His Own Actions.*—When Bissell was asked if he had informed anyone outside the CIA that Bissell was asked if he had informed anyone outside the CIA that an effort to assassinate Castro was underway, he replied, "not to my recollection." He added that he was never told that any official outside the Agency had been made aware of such an effort. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 28-30)

Bissell had ample opportunity to inform appropriate officials outside the CIA of the plot. He worked closely with McGeorge Bundy, the White House liaison for Cuban affairs and formerly one of Bissell's

¹ Prior to the Bay of Pigs, there were many meetings at which both the President and Dulles were present. The Presidential logs from the Kennedy Administration indicate only one meeting before the Bay of Pigs invasion at which the President and Allen Dulles may have met privately. This meeting took place on March 25, 1961. (There is no record of the meeting. We feel compelled to state that the fact of this meeting, on the evidence available, is of little, if any significance or relevance.)

students at Yale University. Bissell and Bundy were also personal friends, but Bissell testified that he never told Bundy about the plot, a fact Bundy confirmed. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 16, 28-29; 7/22/75, p. 31) (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 41) Bissell testified that:

* * * almost from the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, the President himself and a number of Cabinet members and other senior officials took a very active interest in the operation(s) concerning Cuba. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 16)

Bissell was "almost invariably" present at meetings on Cuba in which the President and other senior officials took an "active interest." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 17) Bissell testified that he did not then inform any of them of the assassination plot. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 39)

(3) *Kennedy Administration Officials Testimony.*—The Committee has taken testimony from all living officials high in the Kennedy Administration who dealt with Cuban affairs.¹ The theme of their testimony was that they had no knowledge of any assassination plan or attempt by the United States government before or after the Bay of Pigs invasion, and that they did not believe President Kennedy's character or style of operating would be consistent with approving assassination.

Secretary of Senate Dean Rusk testified, "I never had any reason to believe that anyone that I ever talked to knew about had any active planning of assassination underway." (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 65)

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stated that he had "no knowledge or information about * * * plans or preparations for a possible assassination attempt against Premier Castro." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 7)

Roswell Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense under McNamara, said that killing Castro was not within the mandate of the Special Group, which he construed as having been only to weaken and undermine "the Cuban economy." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 28)

General Maxwell Taylor, who later chaired Special Group meetings on Operation MONGOOSE, stated that he had "never heard" of an assassination effort against Castro, and that he never raised the question of assassination with anyone. (Taylor, 7/9/75, pp. 7-8, 72, 19)

McGeorge Bundy stated that it was his "conviction" that "no one in the Kennedy Administration, in the White House, or in the cabinet, ever gave any authorization, approval, or instruction of any kind for any effort to assassinate anyone by the CIA." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 54) Bundy said that he was never told that assassination efforts were being conducted against Castro. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 63)

Walt W. Rostow, who shared national security duties with Bundy before moving to the Department of State, testified that during his entire tenure in government, he "never heard a reference" to an intention to undertake an assassination effort. (Rostow, 7/9/75, pp. 10, 12-13, 38)

¹ Most of the testimony from officials high in the Kennedy Administration covered the period after the Bay of Pigs invasion, involving Operation MONGOOSE and related activities. (See following Section) It was during this period that high officials in the White House State Department, Defense Department, and the CIA were drawn into the detailed planning of Cuban operations. Their testimony concerning the question of authorization for the assassination plots is extensively discussed *infra*, pp. 148-161.

Asked if he had ever been told anything about CIA efforts to assassinate Castro, Richard Goodwin, Assistant Special Counsel to the President, replied, "No, I never heard of such a thing." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 13)¹

Theodore Sorensen, who said that his "first-hand knowledge" of Cuban affairs was limited to the post-Bay of Pigs period, stated that his general opinion, based on his close contact with President Kennedy, was that

* * * such an act [as assassination] was totally foreign to his character and conscience, foreign to his fundamental reverence for human life and his respect for his adversaries, foreign to his insistence upon a moral dimension in U.S. foreign policy and his concern for this country's reputation abroad and foreign to his pragmatic recognition that so horrendous but inevitably counterproductive a precedent committed by a country whose own chief of state was inevitably vulnerable could only provoke reprisals and inflame hostility. * * * (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 5)

Sorensen stated that President Kennedy "would not make major foreign policy decisions alone without the knowledge or participation of one or more of those senior foreign policy officials in whose judgment and discretion he had confidence." (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 6)

Sorensen concluded his testimony with the following exchange:

Q. Would you think it would be possible that * * * the Agency, the CIA could somehow have been under the impression that they had a tacit authorization for assassination due to a circumspect discussion that might have taken place in any of these meetings?

SORENSEN. It is possible, indeed, I think the President on more than one occasion felt that Mr. Dulles, by making rather vague and sweeping references to particular countries was seeking tacit approval without ever asking for it, and the President was rather concerned that he was not being asked for explicit directives and was not being given explicit information, so it is possible. But on something of this kind, assassination, I would doubt it very much. Either you are for it or you are not for it, and he was not for it. (Sorensen 7/21/75, pp. 32-33)

(4) The Question of Whether Assassination Efforts Were Disclosed in Various Briefings of Administration Officials.

a. Briefing of the President-Elect

In the latter part of November 1960, after the Presidential election, Dulles and Bissell jointly briefed President-elect Kennedy on "the most important details with respect to the operation which became the Bay of Pigs." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 34) Bissell testified that he did not believe the ongoing assassination efforts were mentioned to the President-elect at that meeting. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 27, 35-36) Bissell surmised that the reasons he and Dulles did not tell Kennedy at that initial meeting were that they had "apparently" thought it was not an important matter,² and that they "would have thought that that was a matter of which he should be advised upon assuming office

¹ Goodwin did hear about assassination on two occasions. One involved a meeting between the President and reporter Tad Szulc in November 1961 (see discussion pp. 138-139) and the other involved the Special Group (Augmented) meeting of August 10, 1962. (See pp. 164-165)

² This reason was also given by Bissell in response to the Committee's questioning of his assumption that Dulles probably told President Eisenhower about the assassination operation: "... the Mafia operation was not regarded as of enormous importance and there were much more important matters to talk about with the President." (Bissell, 7/17/75, p. 25)

rather than in advance." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 35) Bissell's latter comment led to the following exchange:

The CHAIRMAN. Isn't it a strange distinction that you draw that on the one hand (as) a Presidential designate, as President-elect, he should have all of the details concerning a planned invasion of Cuba, but that he should not be told about an ongoing attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro?

Mr. BISSELL. I think that in hindsight it could be regarded as peculiar, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. * * * (I) t just seems too strange that if you were charged with briefing the man who was to become President of the U.S. on matters so important as a planned invasion of a neighboring country, and that if you knew at the time in addition to the planned invasion there was an ongoing attempt to assassinate the leader of that country, that you would tell Mr. Kennedy about one matter and not the other.

Mr. BISSELL. Well, Mr. Chairman, it is quite possible that Mr. Dulles did say something about an attempt to or the possibility of making use of syndicate characters for this purpose. I do not remember his doing so at that briefing. My belief is that had he done so, he probably would have done so in rather general terms and that neither of us was in a position to go into detail on the matter. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 35)

However, Bissell also testified generally that pursuant to the doctrine of "plausible denial," efforts were made to keep matters that might be "embarrassing" away from Presidents. (Bissell, 6/11/75, pp. 5-6)

b. Discussion with Bundy on "Executive Action Capability"

Sometime early in the Kennedy Administration, Bissell discussed with Bundy a "capability" for "executive action"—a term Bissell said included various means of "eliminating the effectiveness" of foreign leaders, including assassination.¹ (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 32) Bissell did not tell Bundy about the plot against Castro during their discussion of Executive Action capability. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 31; Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 41) However, Bissell did say that Castro, Trujillo, and Lumumba might have been mentioned in connection with a discussion of "research" into the capability. (Bissell, 6/11/75, pp. 50-51)

c. Taylor/Kennedy Bay of Pigs Inquiry

Following the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, President Kennedy convened a "court of inquiry" which reviewed "the causes of * * * [the] failure" of the operation. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 42, 45) Robert Kennedy, General Maxwell Taylor, Allen Dulles, and Admiral Arleigh Burke comprised the Board. The "Taylor Report," issued on June 13, 1961 after the panel had examined the matter for several weeks, makes no mention of the assassination plot.

Bissell was questioned extensively by the Taylor/Kennedy Board. General Taylor considered Bissell to have been the principal government official in the Bay of Pigs operation. He thought Bissell much more knowledgeable than Dulles, who had deliberately removed himself from the planning and had delegated responsibility to Bissell. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 73)

Bissell said he had not disclosed the assassination plot to the Taylor/Kennedy Board and advanced several reasons for not having done so. First, "the question was never asked;" second, Dulles already knew about the operation; third, "by that time the assassination attempt had

¹ The evidence concerning who initiated the conversation, when it occurred, and what was said, is discussed extensively in section III-C.

been called off;" fourth, the assassination effort was "not germane" because it did not contribute to the failure of the Bay of Pigs. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 44-46; 6/11/75, p. 39) Bissell added that he had "no reason to believe" that Allen Dulles did not discuss the plot with one or more of the other Board members. (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 46) However, both General Taylor and Admiral Burke, the only other members of the Board still living, stated that neither Bissell nor Dulles had informed them of the assassination plot. (Taylor, 7/9/75, pp. 72-73; Burke affidavit, 8/25/75)¹

Bissell's testimony that he had not disclosed the assassination plot to the Kennedy/Taylor Board is consistent with his statement that "I have no knowledge that Robert Kennedy was advised of this [the plot to kill Mr. Castro]." (Bissell, 6/9/75, p. 41)

The Committee tested this statement against other parts of Bissell's testimony. FBI Director Hoover sent the Attorney General a memorandum about the Las Vegas wiretap on May 22, 1961.² An attachment to that memorandum quoted Sheffield Edwards as saying that Bissell, in his "recent briefings" of Taylor and Kennedy "told the Attorney General that some of the associated planning included the use of Giancana and the underworld against Castro."

When Bissell was first shown this document by the Committee, he said: "I have no recollection of briefing those two gentlemen except as members of the Board of Inquiry that I have described, of which Allen Dulles himself was a member." (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 27)

In a subsequent appearance before the Committee, Bissell again said that he had no recollection of the conversation referenced in the May 22 memorandum. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 56) He was sure that if such a conversation had occurred it was not before the Kennedy/Taylor Board. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 64)

Bissell speculated, however, that the memorandum quoted language which "I might very well have used, that is, the use of the underworld against Castro." (Bissell, 6/11/75, p. 21)

The examination of Bissell on whether he had discussed a pre-Bay of Pigs plot with the Attorney General or General Taylor and, if so, why he used such obscure and indirect language, elicited the following testimony:

Q. Did you, sometime in May of 1961 communicate the state of your awareness to the Attorney General in your briefing to him?

BISSELL. Well, there is a report which I was shown, I think it was last week, I believe it also came from the FBI, but I could be wrong about that, or indicating that I did, at that time in May, brief the Attorney General, and I think General Taylor to the effect that the Agency had been using—I don't know whether Giancana was mentioned by name, but in effect, the Underworld against the Castro regime.

Q. Did you tell them—they being the Attorney General and General Taylor—that this use included actual attempts to assassinate Mr. Castro?

BISSELL. I have no idea whether I did [.] I have no idea of the wording. I think it might quite possibly have been left in the more general terms of using the underworld against the Castro regime, or the leadership of the Castro regime.

¹ When asked if Bissell had ever informed him that underworld figures had been offered a large sum to assassinate Castro, General Taylor responded: "No, I never heard that, and it amazes me" (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 72) Taylor said that during his review of the Bay of Pigs operation no mention was made of an assassination effort against Castro. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 72) Taylor noted that Dulles met with the Board of Inquiry some thirty or forty times. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 73)

² A handwritten note from the Attorney General to his assistant on the face of the memorandum indicates that the Attorney General had seen the document. This memorandum is discussed in detail at Section (7)(b), *infra*.

Q. Mr. Bissell, given the state of your knowledge at that time, wouldn't that have been deliberately misleading information?

BISSELL. I don't think it would have been. We were indeed doing precisely that. We were trying to use elements of the underworld against Castro and the Cuban leadership.

Q. But you had information, didn't you, that you were, in fact, trying to kill him?

BISSELL. I think that is a way of using these people against him.

Q. That's incredible. You're saying that in briefing the Attorney General you are telling him you are using the underworld against Castro, and you intended that to mean, Mr. Attorney General, we are trying to kill him?

BISSELL. I thought it signaled just exactly that to the Attorney General, I'm sure.

Q. Then it's your belief that you communicated to the Attorney General that you were, in fact, trying to kill Castro?

BISSELL. I think it is best to rest on that report we do have, which is from a source over which I had no influence and it does use the phrase I have quoted here. Now you can surmise and I can surmise as to just what the Attorney General would have read into that phrase. (Bissell, 7/22/75, pp. 53-54)

Q. Was it your intent to circumlocutiously or otherwise, to advise the Attorney General that you were in the process of trying to kill Castro?

Mr. BISSELL. [U]nless I remembered the conversation at the time, which I don't, I don't have any recollection as to whether that was my intent or not. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 56)

Bissell speculated further that a "proper" briefing might have omitted any reference to the assassination plot. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 59) As bases for his speculation, Bissell suggested first that even if he had "thoroughly briefed" the Attorney General he would have chosen "circumlocutious" language to tell him about the activity involving Giancana. (Bissell, 7/22/75, pp. 53-56); and second that the assassination effort had been "stood down by them." (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 59) Bissell concluded by reiterating that he had "no knowledge" that the Attorney General was "specifically advised" of the assassination plot against Castro. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 62)¹

(5) Conversation Between President Kennedy and Senator George Smathers

George Smathers, former Senator from Florida, testified that the subject of a possible assassination of Castro arose in a conversation Smathers had with President Kennedy on the White House lawn in 1961.² Smathers said he had discussed the general Cuban situation with the President many times. (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 6) Smathers had many Cuban constituents and was familiar with Latin American affairs. He was also a long-time friend of the President. (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 6)

It was Smathers' "impression" that President Kennedy raised the subject of assassination with Smathers because someone else "had ap-

¹ If the FBI quotation of Edwards is to be accorded significant weight, then it is important to note that another section of it contradicts Bissell's assumption that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy had been circumlocutiously advised by Dulles of the assassination plot. Edwards told the FBI that "Allen Dulles was completely unaware of Edwards' contact with Meheu" in connection with Cuban operation.

² Bissell's explanation for Edwards' statement was that Edwards was being "protective" of the DCI. (Bissell, 7/17/75, p. 20) But this testimony must be reconciled with Bissell's previous testimony that Dulles knew of the operation and probably would have told the President about it.

³ Smathers' testimony about this conversation referred to the transcript of an Oral History interview he gave on March 31, 1964. That interview indicates that the conversation probably took place in 1961, before the Bay of Pigs invasion in mid-April.

⁴ White House logs of Presidential meetings indicate only two occasions in 1961 when Senator Smathers met alone with the President. Both of those meetings took place in March.

parently discussed this and other possibilities with respect to Cuba" with the President. (Smathers, 7/23/75, pp. 16, 25) Smathers had no direct knowledge of any such discussion, or who might have been involved. (Smathers, 7/23/75, pp. 18-19, 25) The President did not indicate directly that assassination had been proposed to him. (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 18)

According to Smathers:

*** [President Kennedy] asked me what reaction I thought there would be throughout South America were Fidel Castro to be assassinated *** I told the President that even as much as I disliked Fidel Castro that I did not think it would be a good idea for there to be even considered an assassination of Fidel Castro, and the President of the United States completely agreed with me, that it would be a very unwise thing to do, the reason obviously being that no matter who did it and no matter how it was done and no matter what, that the United States would receive full credit for it, and the President receive full credit for it, and it would work to his great disadvantage with all of the other countries in Central and South America *** I disapproved of it, and he completely disapproved of the idea. (Smathers, 7/23/75, pp. 6-7)

Smathers said that on a later occasion he had tried to discuss Cuba with President Kennedy and the President had made it clear to Smathers that he should not raise the subject with him again.¹

Senator Smathers concluded his testimony by indicating that on Cuban affairs in general, he felt he was "taking a tougher stance than was the President." (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 24) Smathers said he was "positive" that Kennedy opposed assassination. (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 16)

(6) The Question of Whether the President or the Attorney General Might Have Learned of the Assassination Effort from the Cuban Participants

A memorandum for the record in CIA files dated April 24, 1961, reflects that on April 19-20, in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy and other Administration officials, including Secretary of Defense McNamara and General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with a translator and several members of Cuban groups involved in the Bay of Pigs. One of those Cuban exile leaders had been involved in the passage of poison pills to Cuba in March or April of that year;² there is no evidence that any of the other Cubans at the meeting were involved in or aware of the assassination plot, and it is unclear whether that particular Cuban realized that the plot in which he was involved was sponsored by the CIA.³ The April 24 memorandum states that the atmosphere of the meeting reflected depression over the failure of the Bay of Pigs.

¹ One night at dinner with Senator Smathers, the President emphasized his point by cracking his plate at the mention of Cuba. (Smathers, 7/23/75, p. 22)

² According to FBI memoranda dated December 21, 1960, and January 18, 1961, the Cuban was associated with anti-Castro activities financed by United States racketeers, including Santos Trafficante, who hoped to secure illegal monopolies in the event of Castro's overthrow. This same Cuban was subsequently used by Rosselli in the second passage of pills to Cuba in April 1962.

³ Rosselli testified that he represented himself to the Cubans as an agent of American business interests that desired the removal of Castro. (Rosselli, 6/24/75, pp. 17, 89) Maheu testified that he and Rosselli held themselves out to the Cubans as representatives of American industrialists who had been financially hurt by Castro's regime, and that "at no time had we identified to them that the U.S. government in fact was behind the project." (Maheu, 7/29/75, p. 34) The Support Chief testified that he had met the Cuban exile leader with whom Rosselli had dealt only once, and that he had then been "put out as being somebody that had a client, commercial type." The Support Chief was not certain that the Cuban had not suspected his true identity, however, because the Chief testified that after that meeting, Rosselli had told him that the Cuban had remarked, "You can't tell me this guy is not a CIA man." (O.C., 5/30/75, p. 23)

On May 18, 1961, the Taylor/Kennedy Board interviewed several Cuban exile leaders who had been involved in the Bay of Pigs, including the leaders who had cooperated in the assassination plot. The summary of that session states that the subject of the inquiry was the Bay of Pigs operation. Attorney General Robert Kennedy was present.

The Cuban exile leader involved in the assassination plot may have seen the Attorney General on one further occasion shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. Rosselli testified that this Cuban then was being used by the United States Government to aid in intelligence gathering and covert operations directed at Cuba. Rosselli said that he met that Cuban and other Cuban leaders in Washington, D.C., and that the Cubans told him they "were here meeting with the Attorney General and that they were waiting for an appointment from the White House." (Rosselli, 9/22/75, p. 6) They did not tell Rosselli their reasons for seeing the Attorney General, indicating only that the meeting involved the Cuban situation generally. Rosselli said that he did not discuss the assassination operation with the Cuban leaders "because I did not want [the second leader] to hear of it, because he was not part of it." (Rosselli, 9/22/75, p. 10)

(7) *The Question of Whether or not the Assassination Operation Involving Underworld Figures was Known about by Attorney General Kennedy or President Kennedy as Revealed by Investigations of Giancana and Rosselli.*

Beginning in the fall of 1960 and continuing throughout the Bay of Pigs and MONGOOSE periods (through 1962), the CIA undertook an assassination operation against Castro involving underworld figures. Following the discovery of the wiretap in a Las Vegas hotel room on October 31, 1960,¹ the CIA began disclosing aspects of its involvement with underworld figures to the FBI, to certain Justice Department officials, and after the advent of the Kennedy Administration, to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.² This section sets forth evidence bearing on what Attorney General Robert Kennedy did or did not know about the use of underworld figures by the CIA as revealed by FBI and Justice Department investigations surrounding the discovery of the Las Vegas wiretap.

This section also discusses evidence bearing on whether or not President Kennedy knew prior to April 1962, or at any time thereafter about the pre-Bay of Pigs plot involving underworld figures. There are two issues. The first is whether the President was made aware, through either the FBI or the Attorney General, of the CIA's use of Rosselli and Giancana. The second is whether the President learned that the CIA had used Rosselli and Giancana in an attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro.

a. 1960.—On October 18, 1960, FBI Director Hoover sent a memorandum³ to DDP Bissell with copies to some other members of the

¹ The wiretap was placed on the telephone by Arthur J. Balletti. Arrangements for the tap were made by Maheu through his acquaintance, Edward DuBois. (FBI memo 3/23/62) See discussion, *supra*, pp. 77-79.

² Robert Kennedy was Attorney General from January 1961 until September 1964. During his tenure as Attorney General he had close ties not only to law enforcement agencies (FBI and Justice), but also to the CIA. He served on the Special Group (Augmented) which supervised Operation MONGOOSE from December 1961 through October 1962.

³ This memorandum is set forth in full, *supra*, p. 79.

intelligence community¹ stating that an informant had reported that " * * * during [a] recent conversation with several friends. Giancana stated that Fidel Castro was to be done away with very shortly. When doubt was expressed regarding this statement, Giancana reportedly assured those present that Castro's assassination would occur in November."² (Memo, Hoover to Bissell, 10/18/69) According to the memorandum Giancana claimed to have met with the assassin-to-be on three occasions and said that the assassination could be accomplished by dropping a pill in Castro's food. The memorandum did not specifically reveal CIA involvement.

After discovering the Las Vegas wiretap on October 31, 1960, the FBI commenced an investigation which quickly developed that Maheu and Giancana were involved in the case. In April 1961, Rosselli's involvement was discovered.

b. 1961.—The first documentary evidence indicating alleged CIA involvement with the wiretap case is an FBI report dated April 20, 1961. The report stated that on April 18, 1961, Maheu informed the FBI that the tap had played a part in a project "on behalf of the CIA relative to anti-Castro activities," a fact which could be verified by Sheffield Edwards, CIA's Director of Security.³

Bissell testified that he knew during the spring of 1961 that Edwards was seeking to persuade the Justice Department, via communications to the FBI, not to prosecute the parties—including Maheu, Rosselli, and Giancana—who were involved in the Las Vegas tap. Although Bissell believed that Edwards had told the Bureau the truth, he did not expect that Edwards would have revealed that the CIA operation involved assassination. (Bissell, 6/9/75, pp. 63-65)⁴

According to a May 22, 1961, FBI memorandum, on May 3, 1961, Edwards told the FBI⁵ that the CIA had relied on Giancana because of Giancana's contacts with gambling figures who might have sources for use "in connection with CIA's clandestine efforts against the Castro government". Edwards reportedly said that "none of Giancana's efforts have materialized to date and that several of the plans still are working and may eventually 'pay off'". Edwards also stated that he had never been furnished details of the methods used by Giancana and Maheu because this was "dirty business" and he could not afford to

¹ The October 18 memo was also distributed to Assistant Attorney General J. Walter Yeagley and to Army, Air Force, Navy and State Department intelligence offices. Bissell testified that he did not recall this memorandum. (Bissell, 7/22/75, p. 40) He speculated that the CIA's copy ordinarily would have been delivered to him and he would have passed it on to Sheffield Edwards. The action copy was directed to Bissell but he surmised that a copy would also have gone to the Director. (Bissell, 7/22/75, pp. 40, 41)

² The FBI copy of the memorandum contained a postscript stating:

"By separate airtel (night cable), we have instructed the field to be most alert for any additional information concerning alleged plots against Castro and to submit recommendations for close surveillance of Giancana in the event he makes trip to the Miami area or other trips which may be for the purpose of contacting people implicated in this plot."

³ Sam Papich, the FBI liaison with the CIA during this period, stated that the FBI was furious when it learned of the CIA's use of Maheu, Rosselli and Giancana in the tap because it might inhibit possible prosecutions against them in the wiretap case and in others.

An arrangement (which was informal with Edwards, but was formalized with William Harvey) was subsequently made between the CIA and the FBI. The arrangement was that Papich would be informed by Agency personnel of any CIA contacts with underworld figures, of their movements, and any intelligence which directly or indirectly related to organized crime activities in the United States. The CIA would not report to the FBI any information concerning the objectives of Agency operations.

⁴ Bissell also testified that the "cover story" for the operation may have been intelligence gathering (i.d., p. 66).

⁵ Edwards apparently gave this information to Sam Papich.

know the specific actions of Maheu and Giancana in pursuit of any mission for the CIA.

Although Edwards did not reveal the specific objective of the Giancana operation to the FBI, he was referring to the Agency's recent assassination attempt involving the passage of poison involving a Cuban exile leader sometime between mid-March and mid-April 1961.¹

The summary of Edwards' statements to the FBI that was sent by Hoover to Attorney General Kennedy on May 22, 1961, stated, in part that:

Colonel Edwards advised that in connection with CIA's operation against Castro he personally contacted Robert Maheu during the fall of 1960 for the purpose of using Maheu as a "cut-out" in contacts with Sam Giancana, a known hoodlum in the Chicago area. Colonel Edwards said that since the underworld controlled gambling activities in Cuba under the Batista government, it was assumed that this element would still continue to have sources and contacts in Cuba which perhaps could be utilized successfully in connection with CIA's clandestine efforts against the Castro government. As a result, Maheu's services were solicited as a "cut-out" because of his possible entree into underworld circles. Maheu obtained Sam Giancana's assistance in this regard and according to Edwards, Giancana gave every indication of cooperating through Maheu in attempting to accomplish several clandestine efforts in Cuba. Edwards added that none of Giancana's efforts have materialized to date and that several of the plans still are working and may eventually "pay off."

Colonel Edwards related that he had no direct contact with Giancana; that Giancana's activities were completely "back stopped" by Maheu and that Maheu would frequently report Giancana's action and information to Edwards. No details or methods used by Maheu or Giancana in accomplishing their missions were ever reported to Edwards. Colonel Edwards said that since this is "dirty business", he could not afford to have knowledge of the actions of Maheu and Giancana in pursuit of any mission for CIA. Colonel Edwards added that he has neither given Maheu any instruction to use technical installations of any type nor has the subject of technical installations ever come up between Edwards and Maheu in connection with Giancana's activity.

Mr. Bissell, in his recent briefings of General Taylor and the Attorney General and in connection with their inquiries into CIA relating to the Cuban situation [the Taylor Board of Inquiry] told the Attorney General that some of the associated planning included the use of Giancana and the underworld against Castro.²

The summary of Edwards' conversation with the FBI was accompanied by a cover memorandum from Hoover stating that Edwards had acknowledged the "attempted" use of Maheu and "hoodlum elements" by the CIA in "anti-Castro activities" but that the "purpose for placing the wiretap * * * has not been determined * * *." (FBI memo to Attorney General, 5/22/61) The memorandum also explained that Maheu had contacted Giancana in connection with the CIA program and CIA had requested that the information be handled on a "need-to-know" basis.³

¹ See the preceding section for a discussion of this Cuban exile leader.

² For a discussion of this part of the memorandum and Bissell's testimony on it, see pp. 121-123 *supra*.

³ At the time Hoover sent the May 22, 1961, memorandum to the Attorney General, indicating that there was a CIA/Giancana link, Bureau files already contained another memorandum revealing that Giancana had earlier talked about an assassination attempt against Castro. This earlier memorandum dated October 18, 1960, did not reveal any Giancana/CIA connections, but anyone seeing the October 18 memorandum and knowing of the CIA's association with Giancana in a project "against Castro" should have realized the connection.

Courtney Evans, the FBI's liaison with the Attorney General, however, testified that pursuant to Bureau procedure, Hoover would have received an intra-bureau memorandum giving him a detailed summary of the information that was in the files. (Evans, 8/28/75, pp. 70, 72) (footnote continued on p. 128)

Hoover's memorandum to Attorney General Kennedy was stamped "received" and a marginal notation in Kennedy's handwriting said: "Courtney I hope this will be followed up vigorously." ¹ Carbon copies were sent to Deputy Attorney General Byron R. White and Assistant Attorney General Herbert J. Miller Jr.

A memorandum from Evans to Allen Belmont, Assistant to the Director (FBI) dated June 6, 1961, stated:

We checked with CIA and ascertained that CIA had used Maheu as an intermediary in contacting Sam Giancana, the notorious Chicago hoodlum. This was in connection with anti-Castro activities. CIA, however, did not give any instructions to Maheu to use any technical installations. In connection with this information received from CIA concerning their attempted utilization of the hoodlum element, CIA requested this information be handled on a "need-to-know" basis.

We are conducting a full investigation in this wiretap case requested by the Department and the field has been instructed to press this investigation vigorously. Accordingly, the Attorney General will be orally assured that we are following up vigorously and the results of our investigation will be furnished to the Department promptly.

Entries in the FBI files indicate that the FBI vigorously pursued its investigation of the wiretap case. However, on August 16, 1961, the Assistant United States Attorney in Las Vegas reported his reluctance to proceed with the case because of deficiencies in the evidence and his concern that CIA's alleged involvement might become known. The Department of Justice files indicate no activity between September 1961, when the FBI's investigation was concluded, and January 1962, when the question of prosecution in the case was brought up for reconsideration.

An entry in the Justice Department files dated October 6, 1961, stated:

Yesterday P.M. told me that A.G. had inquired as to status of this case and think Harold [Shapiro] got it taken care of OK.

Evans also testified that he did not recall ever having seen the October 18 memorandum, that he had never heard from any source of an assassination plot involving the Central Intelligence Agency and members of the underworld during his tenure with the Bureau, and that he never discussed assassination with the Attorney General. (Evans, 8/28/75, pp. 55-57) However, he did have discussions with the Attorney General following the May 22 memorandum. Evans testified that if the October 18 memorandum had been sent to him, it would have been sent to him by Thomas McAndrews, who was Chief of the Organized Crime Section of the Special Investigative Division of the Bureau. McAndrews, who was responsible for distributing information from the FBI to the entire intelligence community, could not recall ever having given the October 18 memorandum to Evans. When asked if he believed the information contained in that memorandum had ever been brought to the attention of Attorney General Kennedy, McAndrews testified: "I think he was briefed specifically on it, either in writing or orally * * * I think it was done. But I can't say for sure." (McAndrews, 9/17/75, p. 27)

Ralph Hill was the Special Agent in charge of the investigation of Giancana. He testified that he recalled the information in the October 18 memorandum, but that he did not recall the memorandum itself. He stated that because of the Attorney General's interest in organized crime figures, it was the practice for field reports concerning Giancana to be given to Courtney Evans, who would then forward them to the Attorney General.

The only documents the Committee has seen indicating that the FBI realized the October 18 memorandum related to the CIA/underworld figures operation, were two memoranda, both dated March 6, 1967, and both entitled "Central Intelligence Agency's Intentions to Send Hoodlums to Cuba to Assassinate Castro." The first memorandum to Attorney General Ramsey Clark stated that "it appears that data which came to our attention in October 1960 possibly pertains to the above-captioned matter." The second, an internal FBI memorandum used in the preparation of the memorandum for the Attorney General, stated that there were two other references in the files to the overall information mentioned above, one of which was the statement made by Giancana that in October 1960 he met with an individual who was to assassinate Castro in November 1960.

¹ Courtney Evans was the FBI's liaison with the Attorney General and the President. Courtney Evans had worked closely with the then Senator John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy on the McClellan Committee, which had investigated the relationship between organized labor and organized crime. During the McClellan investigation Sam Giancana was one of the major crime figures examined. After becoming Attorney General, Robert Kennedy had singled out Giancana as one of the underworld leaders to be most intensely investigated.

With the exception of this briefing, the FBI and Justice files indicate no other activity in the Balletti wiretap case from September 1961 through January 1962. There was no activity in the assassination effort involving underworld figures from April 1961 until mid-April 1962.

c. 1962.—A note of January 29, 1962, from the head of the Administrative Regulations Division to the first and second assistants in the Criminal Division stated:

Our primary interest was in Giancana * * * apparently detective (Maheu) has some connection with Giancana but he claims was because of CIA assignment in connection with Cuba—CIA has objected, may have to drop.

Assistant Attorney General Herbert Miller then asked the FBI to again speak with Edwards about the prosecution of Maheu. (Memo from Miller, 1/31/62)

An FBI memorandum dated February 24, 1962, set forth Miller's request that Edwards be reinterviewed about possible prosecutions in the Balletti case. A reply memorandum from the FBI to Miller on February 7, 1962, stated that Edwards had been contacted and that he objected to the prosecution.

(1) Did President Kennedy Learn Anything About Assassination Plots as a Result of the FBI Investigation of Giancana and Rosselli?

As elaborated in the previous sections of this report, all living CIA officials who were involved in the underworld assassination attempt or who were in a position to have known of the attempt have testified that they never discussed the assassination plot with the President. By May 1961, however, the Attorney General and Hoover were aware that the CIA had earlier used Giancana in an operation against Cuba and FBI files contained two memoranda which, if simultaneously reviewed, would have led one to conclude that the CIA operation had involved assassination.¹ There is no evidence that any one within the FBI concluded that the CIA had used Giancana in an assassination attempt. The Committee has uncovered a chain of events, however, which would have given Hoover an opportunity to have assembled the entire picture and to have reported the information to the President.

Evidence before the Committee indicates that a close friend of President Kennedy had frequent contact with the President from the end of 1960 through mid-1962. FBI reports and testimony indicate that the President's friend was also a close friend of John Rosselli and Sam Giancana and saw them often during this same period.²

On February 27, 1962, Hoover sent identical copies of a memorandum to the Attorney General and Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President. The memorandum stated that information developed in connection with a concentrated FBI investigation of John Rosselli revealed that Rosselli had been in contact with the President's

¹ The two memoranda, which are discussed in considerable detail *supra*, were the October 18, 1960, memorandum linking Giancana to an assassination plot (but not mentioning CIA) and the May 22, 1961, memorandum linking Giancana to a CIA operation against Cuba involving "dirty business" (but not mentioning assassination).

² White House telephone logs show 70 instances of phone contact between the White House and the President's friend whose testimony confirms frequent phone contact with the President himself.

Both the President's friend and Rosselli testified that the friend did not know about either the assassination operation or the wiretap case. Giancana was killed before he was available for questioning.

friend. The memorandum also reported that the individual was maintaining an association with Sam Giancana, described as "a prominent Chicago underworld figure." Hoover's memorandum also stated that a review of the telephone toll calls from the President's friend's residence revealed calls to the White House. The President's secretary ultimately received a copy of the memorandum and said she believed she would have shown it to the President.

The association of the President's friend with the "hoodlums" and that person's connection with the President was again brought to Hoover's attention in a memorandum preparing him for a meeting with the President planned for March 22, 1962. Courtney Evans testified that Hoover generally required a detailed summary of information in the FBI files for drafting important memoranda or preparing for significant meetings. (Evans, 8/28/75, pp. 70, 72) The FBI files on Giancana then contained information disclosing Giancana's connection with the CIA as well as his involvement in assassination plotting. (Memoranda of 10/18/60 and 5/22/61)

On March 22, Hoover had a private luncheon with President Kennedy. There is no record of what transpired at that luncheon. According to the White House logs, the last telephone contact between the White House and the President's friend occurred a few hours after the luncheon.

The fact that the President and Hoover had a luncheon at which one topic was presumably that the President's friend was also a friend of Giancana and Rosselli raises several possibilities. The first is, assuming that Hoover did in fact receive a summary of FBI information relating to Giancana prior to his luncheon with the President, whether that summary reminded the Director that Giancana had been involved in a CIA operation against Cuba that included "dirty business" and further indicated that Giancana had talked about an assassination attempt against Castro. A second is whether Hoover would then have taken the luncheon as an opportunity to fulfill his duty to bring this information to the President's attention.¹ What actually transpired at that luncheon may never be known, as both participants are dead and the FBI files contain no records relating to it.

On March 23, 1962, the day immediately following his luncheon with the President, at which Rosselli and Giancana were presumably discussed, Hoover sent a memorandum to Edwards stating:

At the request of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, this matter was discussed with the CIA Director of Security on February 7, 1962, and we were advised that your agency would object to any prosecution which would necessitate the use of CIA personnel or CIA information. We were also informed that introduction of evidence concerning the CIA operation would be embarrassing to the Government.

The Criminal Division has now requested that CIA specifically advise whether it would or would not object to the initiation of criminal prosecution against the subjects, Balletti, Maheu, and the individual known as J. W. Harrison for conspiracy to violate the "Wire Tapping Statute."

¹ The President, thus notified, might then have inquired further of the CIA. The Presidential calendar indicates that the President had meetings at which most CIA officials witting of the assassination plot were present during the period from February 27 through April 2, 1962. All of those persons, however, have testified that the President never asked them about the assassination plot.

An early reply will be appreciated in order that we may promptly inform the Criminal Division of CIA's position in this matter.¹

As a result of this request, the CIA did object to the prosecution of those involved in the wiretap case, thereby avoiding exposure of Giancana's and Rosselli's involvement with the Agency in an assassination plot. We now turn to events which occurred during April and May 1962 which culminated in the formal decision to forego prosecution in the wiretap case.

(2) *The Formal Decision to Forego Prosecution.*

(a) Events Leading up to a Formal Briefing of the Attorney General.

A memorandum for the record of April 4, 1962, reflects that Edwards met with Sam Papich, the FBI liaison to the CIA, on March 28 or 29 and told Papich that:

Any prosecution in the matter would endanger sensitive sources and methods used in a duly authorized intelligence project and would not be in the national interest. (Edwards' memorandum, 4/4/62)

A memorandum for Assistant Attorney General Miller from Hoover dated April 10, 1962, stated that Edwards:

Has now advised that he has no desire to impose any restriction which might hinder efforts to prosecute any individual, but he is firmly convinced that prosecution of Maheu undoubtedly would lead to exposure of most sensitive information relating to the abortive Cuban invasion in April 1961, and would result in most damaging embarrassment to the U.S. Government. He added that in view of this, his agency objects to the prosecution of Maheu. (Memo, Hoover to Miller, 4/10/62)

On April 16, 1962, Lawrence Houston, CIA General Counsel, met with Miller.² Houston reported to Edwards that Miller envisioned "no major difficulty in stopping action for prosecution." Houston offered to brief the Attorney General, but said that he "doubted if we would want to give the full story to anyone else in the Department," and Miller did not desire to know the "operational details." On April 20 Houston told Miller's first assistant that he was requesting Justice not to prosecute "on grounds of security," and asked to be informed if it was necessary to brief the Attorney General. (Memo, Houston to Edwards, 4/26/62)

In the latter half of April 1962 William Harvey, head of the CIA's anti-Castro effort, gave poison pills to Roselli for use in the post-Bay of Pigs assassination effort against Fidel Castro using underworld figures.

(b) Briefing of the Attorney General on May 7, 1962.

An entry in Attorney General Kennedy's calendar for May 7, 1962, states "1:00—Richard Helms."³ At 4:00 the Attorney General met

¹ This memorandum is peculiar in two respects. First, the CIA had already orally objected to prosecution on two occasions. Second, Hoover was quizzing the CIA on behalf of the Department of Justice, a task that would normally be performed by the Department's Criminal Division.

² Houston testified that he did not remember these meetings. (Houston, 6/2/75, p. 3) Miller recalled only that Houston had spoken to him about a wiretap and possible CIA embarrassment. (Miller, 8/11/75, p. 16)

³ Helms testified that he did not recall meeting with the Attorney General on May 7 and his desk book does not reflect any such meeting. When asked if he had ever met with the Attorney General to set up a knowingly inaccurate briefing, Helms testified that he had not and that if he had, he would certainly remember it because "I would have been coniving or colluding, and I have no recollection of ever having done anything like that." (Helms, 9/16/75, p. 8)

with Houston and Edwards to be briefed on the CIA operation involving Maheu, Rosselli, and Giancana. The briefing was at the Attorney General's request. (I.G. Report, p. 62a)

On May 9, 1962, the Attorney General met with Director Hoover. Hoover prepared a memorandum for the record dated May 10, 1962, recounting what was said at that meeting. On May 11 the Attorney General requested Edwards to prepare a memorandum of the May 7 briefing. Edwards, with Houston's assistance, prepared a memorandum dated May 14, 1962, relating what had transpired at the May 7 briefing. Also, on the same day, Edwards had a telephone conversation with William Harvey. As a result of that conversation, Edwards prepared an internal memorandum for the record dated May 14, 1962, which falsely stated that the operation involving Rosselli was then being terminated.

(aa) The Attorney General Was Told That the Operation Had Involved an Assassination Attempt

Houston testified that the operation was described to the Attorney General as an assassination attempt. (Houston, 6/2/75, p. 14) When interviewed for the Inspector General's Report in 1967, Edwards said he briefed Kennedy "all the way." (I.G. Report, p. 62a) A memorandum by Hoover of a conference with Kennedy on May 9, two days after the briefing states:

The Attorney General told me he wanted to advise me of a situation in the Giancana case which had considerably disturbed him. He stated a few days ago he had been advised by CIA that in connection with Giancana, CIA had hired Robert A. Maheu, a private detective in Washington, D.C., to approach Giancana with a proposition of paying \$150,000 to hire some gunmen to go into Cuba and to kill Castro. (Memorandum from Hoover, 4/10/62)

(bb) Evidence Concerning Whether the Attorney General Was Told That the Operation Had Been Terminated

Houston, who said that he was told about the use of underworld figures for the first time by Edwards a few weeks before the briefing of the Attorney General, testified that it was his "understanding that the assassination plan aimed at Castro had been terminated completely," and that Kennedy was told "the activity had been terminated as of that time." (Houston, 6/2/75, pp. 13, 15) Edwards testified that he had also believed at the time of the briefing that the operation had been concluded and that he had so informed Kennedy. (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 16)¹ The memorandum of the briefing prepared by Edwards describes the operation as having been "conducted during the period approximately August 1960 to May 1961." It further states:

After the failure of the invasion of Cuba word was sent through Maheu to Rosselli to call off the operation and Rosselli was told to tell his principal that the proposal to pay one hundred fifty thousand dollars for completion of the operation had been definitely withdrawn. (Memo from Edwards, 4/14/62)

¹ Harvey, who was informed of the briefing by Edwards, could not recall whether Edwards told him that the Attorney General had been briefed that the operation had been terminated. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 99)

Based upon interviews with Houston and Edwards, the Inspector General's Report concluded that:

The Attorney General was not told that the gambling syndicate operation had already been reactivated, nor, as far as we know, was he ever told that CIA had a continuing involvement with U.S. gangster elements. (I.G. Report, p. 65)¹

Houston and Edwards recalled that Kennedy was upset that the CIA had used Giancana. Houston testified:

If you have seen Mr. Kennedy's eyes get steely and his jaw set and his voice get low and precise, you get a definite feeling of unhappiness. (Houston, 6/2/75, p. 14)

In his memorandum of the meeting with the Attorney General two days after the briefing, Hoover recalled:

I expressed great astonishment at this in view of the bad reputation of Maheu and the horrible judgment in using a man of Giancana's background for such a project. The Attorney General shared the same views. (Memo from Hoover, 5/10/62)²

Hoover's May 10 memorandum further states that the Attorney General said that "CIA admitted that they had assisted Maheu in making this installation and for these reasons CIA was in a position where it could not afford to have any action taken against Giancana and Maheu."³

According to Edwards, at the end of the briefing, Kennedy said: "I want you to let me know about these things," or words to that effect. (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 17) Houston recalled that Kennedy said:

In very specific terms that if we were going to get involved with Mafia personnel again he wanted to be informed first * * *. I do not remember his commenting about the operation itself. (Houston, 6/2/75, p. 14)⁴

Hoover recorded that two days after the briefing, the Attorney General told him that:

He had asked CIA whether they had ever cleared their actions in hiring Maheu and Giancana with the Department of Justice before they did so and he was advised by CIA they had not cleared these matters with the Department of Justice. He stated he then issued orders to CIA to never again in the future take such steps without first checking with the Department of Justice. (Memo from Hoover, 5/10/62)

Edwards testified that at the time of the Kennedy briefing, he did not know that the CIA was still utilizing its underworld contacts,

¹ In a section entitled "The Facts As We Know Them," the I.G. Report stated that Attorney General Kennedy "was briefed on Gambling Syndicate—Phase One after it was over. He was not briefed on Phase Two." (I.G. Report, p. 118)

² The Hoover memorandum indicates two reasons for Attorney General Kennedy's displeasure. First, the CIA had put itself into a position where "it could not afford to have any action taken against Giancana or Maheu." Second, Hoover: "Stated as he [Kennedy] well knew the 'gutter gossip' was that the reason nothing had been done against Giancana was because of Giancana's close relationship with Frank Sinatra who, in turn, claimed to be a close friend of the Kennedy family. The Attorney General stated he realized this and it was for that reason that he was quite concerned when he received this information from CIA about Giancana and Maheu." (Sinatra is not the President's friend discussed in the preceding subsection.)

³ Despite the Attorney General's concern that prosecutions of parties involved in the tap might be foreclosed in the future, both Giancana and Rosselli were in fact prosecuted later for crimes unrelated to the tap.

⁴ In the CIA memorandum of the briefing prepared by Edwards, Edwards wrote that "at the time of the incident, neither this Agency nor the undersigned knew of the proposed technical installation."

⁵ Houston testified that Kennedy insisted "There was not to be any contact of the Mafia * * * without prior consultation with him." (Houston, 6/2/75, p. 37) When interviewed in 1967 for the Inspector General's Report, Houston had recalled Kennedy as saying: "I trust that if you ever try to do business with organized crime again—with gangsters—you will let the Attorney General know." (I.G. Report, p. 62a)

(Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 16) even though the operation had been re-activated under the Directorate of Plans, and in early April 1962, poison pills had been given to Rosselli.

As concluded by the CIA itself in the Inspector General's Report, Edwards' statement that he was not aware of these developments is implausible. In the memorandum of May 14, 1962, prepared for the Attorney General, Edwards stated that Harvey had asked him to arrange a contact with Rosselli, and that a meeting had been set for April 9. The Inspector General's Report observed:

When the Attorney General was briefed on 7 May, Edwards knew that Harvey had been introduced to Rosselli. He must also have known that his subordinate, the Support Chief, was in Miami and roughly for what purpose (although Edwards does not now recall this). (I.G. Report, p. 65) ¹

Harvey testified that Edwards knew the operation was still in effect and that Edwards told Harvey about the briefing of the Attorney General shortly afterwards. (Harvey, 6/25/75, pp. 98-100)

In the internal memorandum for the record dated May 14, 1962, written the same day as the memorandum of the Attorney General's briefing, Edwards stated:

On this date Mr. Harvey called me and indicated that he was dropping any plans for the use of Subject (Rosselli) for the future.

Harvey testified that the memorandum "was not true, and Colonel Edwards knew it was not true." (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 97) Edwards confirmed that he was aware at that time that Harvey was "trying" to assume control of the operation. (Edwards, 5/30/75, p. 19)

Harvey testified that Edwards' entry would cause the record to show incorrectly that the operation had been terminated, when in fact it had not been. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 102) Harvey's reasons explaining the decision to "falsify" the record were:

* * * if this ever came up in the future, the file would show that on such and such a date he was advised so and so, and he was no longer chargeable with this. * * * (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 100)

This was purely an internal document for use in closing out this operation as far as the Office of Security and its Director, that is its Chief, personally, was concerned. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 102)

To bring this operation under some sort of sensible control, determine what it was, and attempt to insulate against what I consider a very definite potential for damage to the agency and to the government. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 101)

When questioned about the fact that the Attorney General had been told that the operation had been terminated when in fact it was continuing, Helms testified:

* * * I am not able to tell you whether this operation was ongoing, whether it had really been stopped, whether it had been fairly stopped, whether there was fun and games going on between the officers involved as to, we will create a fiction that it stopped or go ahead with it. I just don't recall any of those things at all * * *. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 109)

(ii) *Post-Bay Of Pigs Underworld Plot—MONGOOSE Period*

This section discusses evidence bearing on whether the post-Bay of Pigs operation to assassinate Castro involving underworld figures—which began in April 1962, and continued at least through the Cuban

¹ Papich presumably continued to receive reports from the CIA on Harvey's subsequent meetings with Rosselli.

missile crisis in October of that year—was authorized or known about by Administration officials outside of the CIA.

This issue must be considered in light of the differing perceptions of Helms and his subordinates, on the one hand, and of other members of the Kennedy Administration, including the Director of the CIA, on the other. While Helms testified that he never received a direct order to assassinate Castro, he fully believed that the CIA was at all times acting within the scope of its authority and that Castro's assassination came within the bounds of the Kennedy Administration's effort to overthrow Castro and his regime. Helms said that he inherited the Rosselli program from Bissell, and, due to its sensitive and unsavory character, it was not the type of program one would discuss in front of high officials. He stated that he never informed McCone or any other officials of the Kennedy Administration of the assassination plot. However, McCone and the surviving members of the Kennedy Administration testified that they believed a Castro assassination was impermissible without a direct order, that assassination was outside the parameters of the Administration's anti-Castro program, and each testified that to his knowledge no such order was given to Helms.

An understanding of the Kennedy Administration's 1962 covert action program for Cuba is essential to an evaluation of the testimony on the issue of authorization. That program, which was designed to overthrow the Castro regime, and the events in 1961 leading up to it are discussed below. A detailed exposition of the testimony then follows.

(1) EVENTS PRECEDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MONGOOSE

A. THE TAYLOR/KENNEDY BOARD OF INQUIRY

On April 22, 1961, following the Bay of Pigs failure, the President requested General Maxwell Taylor to conduct a reevaluation of "our practices and programs in the areas of military and paramilitary, guerilla and anti-guerilla activity which fall short of outright war." Taylor was to give special attention to Cuba (Letter to Maxwell Taylor, 4/22/61) and Robert Kennedy was to be his principal colleague in the effort.

The resulting review concluded:

We have been struck with the general feeling that there can be no long-term living with Castro as a neighbor. His continued presence within the hemispheric community as a dangerously effective exponent of Communism and anti-Americanism constitutes a real menace capable of eventually overthrowing the elected governments in any one or more of weak Latin American republics. * * *

It is recommended that the Cuban situation be reappraised in the light of all presently known factors and new guidance be provided for political, military, economic and propaganda action against Castro. (Report to the President, 6/13/61, Memo No. 4, p. 8)

It is clear from the record, moreover, that the defeat at the Bay of Pigs had been regarded as a humiliation for the President personally and for the CIA institutionally.

By July 1961, the Special Group had agreed that "the basic objective toward Cuba was to provide support to a U.S. program to develop opposition to Castro and to help bring about a regime acceptable to the

U.S." (Memo for the Record, 7/21/61) Occasional harassment operations were mounted during the summer but there was no overall strategy and little activity.

B. NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM 100 OF OCTOBER 5, 1961, AND THE CIA INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

In the fall of 1961 the Kennedy Administration considered the consequences of Castro's removal from power and the prospects for United States military intervention if that occurred. Two studies were prepared. National Security Action Memorandum 100 (NSAM 100) directed the State Department to assess the potential courses of action open to the United States should Castro be removed from the Cuban scene, and to prepare a contingency plan with the Department of Defense for military intervention in that event. The CIA prepared an "Intelligence Estimate" on the "situation and prospects" in Cuba. The focus of these studies was on the possible courses of action open to the United States in a post-Castro Cuba, rather than on the means that might bring about Castro's removal. It does not appear, however, that assassination was excluded from the potential means by which Castro might be removed.

On October 5, 1961, McGeorge Bundy issued NSAM 100 entitled "Contingency Planning for Cuba." It was addressed to the Secretary of State and stated in full:

In confirmation of oral instructions conveyed to Assistant Secretary of State Woodward, a plan is desired for the indicated contingency.

The Special Group Minutes of October 6, 1961, state that the Group was told that in addition to an overall plan for Cuban covert operations, "a contingency plan in connection with the possible removal of Castro from the Cuban scene" was in preparation. (Memorandum for the Record of Special Group meeting, 10/6/61) An October 5, 1961 Memorandum for the Record by Thomas Parrott, Secretary to the Special Group, states that Parrott informed the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs that "what was wanted was a plan against the contingency that Castro would in some way or other be removed from the Cuban scene." Parrott's memorandum stated that in preparing the plan, "the presence and positions of Raul (Castro) and Che Guevara must be taken into account," and that General Taylor had told Parrott he preferred "the President's interest in the matter not be mentioned" to the Assistant Secretary. This memorandum also said that "on the covert side, I talked to Tracy Barnes in CIA and asked that an up-to-date report be furnished as soon as possible on what is going on and what is being planned."

The CIA's Board of National Estimates (which was not part of the Directorate of Plans) prepared a study entitled "The Situation and Prospects in Cuba."¹ The CIA estimate was pessimistic about the

¹ The Inspector General apparently had access to an earlier draft of this intelligence estimate. (I.G. Report, p. 4) In reporting that many CIA officers interviewed in the I.G. investigation stressed that "elimination of the dominant figures in a government . . . will not necessarily cause the downfall of the government," the Report stated: "This point was stressed with respect to Castro and Cuba in an internal CIA draft paper of October 1961, which was initiated in response to General Maxwell Taylor's desire for a contingency plan. The paper took the position that the demise of Fidel Castro, from whatever cause, would offer little opportunity for the liberation of Cuba from Communist and Soviet Bloc control." (I.G. Report, p. 4)

The CIA has been unable to locate the draft paper referred to in the Inspector General's Report.

success of a Cuban internal revolt, and found that Castro's assassination would probably strengthen the Communist position in Cuba.

After reviewing the economic, military, and political situation in Cuba, the CIA estimate concluded that the Castro regime had sufficient popular support and repressive capabilities to cope with any internal threat. The concluding paragraph of the estimate, entitled "If Castro Were to Die," noted that:

His [Castro's] loss now, by assassination or by natural causes, would have an unsettling effect, but would almost certainly not prove fatal to the regime * * * [I]ts principal surviving leaders would probably rally together in the face of a common danger. (Estimate, p. 9)

The CIA study predicted that if Castro died, "some sort of power struggle would almost certainly develop eventually," and, regardless of the outcome of such a struggle, the Communist Party's influence would be "significantly" increased.¹ (Estimate, p. 9)

Bundy testified that the contingency referred to in NSAM 100 and the related documents was "what would we do if Castro were no longer there," and that "clearly one of the possibilities would be assassination." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 77) However, Bundy emphasized that NSAM 100 represented an effort to assess the effect should Castro be removed from power by any means (including assassination) but "without going further with the notion [of assassination] itself."² (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 77) Bundy contended that the President was not considering an assassination, but rather "what are things going to be like after Castro?" (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 81)³

Taylor testified that he had no recollection of NSAM 100 or of the events described in the related documents. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 18) Based on his review of the documents, Taylor testified that "it sounds like purely a political consideration of the sequence of power in Cuba"⁴ and he emphasized that "never at any time" did he raise the question of assassination with Parrott, or with anybody else. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 19)

Special Group Secretary Parrott testified that the request for a plan reflected in his memorandum of October 5, 1961, and the reference in that memorandum to the "contingency that Castro would in some way or another be removed from the Cuban scene", reflected interest in a contingency study for Castro's removal, but by means "short of being killed." (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 83)

¹ A cover memorandum by Lansdale transmitting the CIA estimate to Robert Kennedy criticized the estimate's assessment that "it is highly improbable that an extensive popular uprising could be fomented" against Castro as a "conclusion of fact quite outside the area of intelligence." Lansdale stated that the estimate "seems to be the major evidence to be used to oppose your program" (referring to the proposed overall MONGOOSE operation). (Memo, Lansdale to Robert Kennedy, 11/62, p. 1) As discussed in detail at p. 140, Lansdale's basic concept for the MONGOOSE program was to overthrow Castro through an internal revolt of the Cuban people.

² "If people were suggesting this to you and you were curious about whether it was worth exploring, one way of getting more light on it without going any further with that notion itself would be to ask political people, not intelligence people, what they thought would happen if Castro were not there any longer." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 79)

³ Bundy explained: " * * * It was precisely to insulate the President from any false inference that what he was asking about was assassination. It is easy to confuse the question, what are things going to be like after Castro, with the other question, and we were trying to focus attention on the information he obviously wanted, which is, what would happen if we did do this sort of thing, and not get one into the frame of mind of thinking that he was considering doing it." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 81)

⁴ Taylor said he was puzzled by the wording of NSAM 100 and the related documents and stated, "I just cannot tie in the language here with a plausible explanation." (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 18)

C. PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S NOVEMBER 9, 1961 CONVERSATION WITH TAD SZULC

In early November 1961 Tad Szulc¹ was asked by Richard Goodwin, a Special Assistant to President Kennedy, to meet with Attorney General Robert Kennedy on November 8 to discuss the situation in Cuba. The meeting was "off-the-record." Szulc attended as a friend of Goodwin's, and not as a reporter. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 24) During the meeting with Robert Kennedy, the discussion centered on "the situation in Cuba following the [Bay of Pigs] invasion [and] the pros and cons of some different possible actions by the United States Government in that context." (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 25) According to Szulc the subject of assassination was not mentioned during this meeting. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 31)

At the close of the meeting, Robert Kennedy asked Szulc to meet with the President. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 25) The next day Szulc, accompanied by Goodwin, met with President Kennedy for over an hour in the Oval Office.² (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 25) Szulc recalled that the President discussed "a number of his views on Cuba in the wake of the Bay of Pigs, asked me a number of questions concerning my conversations with Premier Castro, and * * * what the United States could [or] might do in * * * either a hostile way or in establishing some kind of a dialogue * * *" (Szulc, 6/10/75, pp. 25-26)

Szulc testified that after this general discussion, the President asked "what would you think if I ordered Castro to be assassinated?" (Szulc, 6/10/75, pp. 26, 27; Szulc Notes of conversation with President Kennedy, 11/9/61) Szulc testified that he replied that an assassination would not necessarily cause a change in the Cuban system, and that it was Szulc's personal view that the United States should not be party to murders and political assassinations. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 26) Szulc said that the President responded, "I agree with you completely." Szulc stated:

He [President Kennedy] then went on for a few minutes to make the point how strongly he and his brother felt that the United States for moral reasons should never be in a situation of having recourse to assassination. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 27)

Szulc's notes of the meeting with the President state:

JFK then said he was testing me, that he felt the same way—he added "I'm glad you feel the same way"—because indeed U.S. morally must not be part [sic] to assassinations.

JFK said he raised question because he was under terrific pressure from advisers (think he said intelligence people, but not positive) to okay a Castro murder. sed [sic] he was resisting pressures. (Szulc note of conversation with President Kennedy, 11/9/61)

¹ Tad Szulc was a reporter in the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times*. Szulc had visited Cuba in May-June 1961, following the Bay of Pigs invasion. During the course of that trip, Szulc had a "series of very long conversations" with Castro. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 24)

² Goodwin testified that President Kennedy met frequently with members of the press and others who were experts in various fields, but that it was "possible" that the meeting with Szulc may have been an occasion for the President to consider Szulc for a position in the Administration. (Goodwin, 7/18/75, pp. 29-30)

On November 2, 1961, Goodwin had addressed an "eyes only" memorandum to the President and the Attorney General outlining a suggested organization for what became the MONGOOSE operation. Goodwin proposed five "staff components," including "intelligence collection," "guerrilla and underground," and "propaganda." The memorandum stated: "As for propaganda, I thought we might ask Tad Szulc to take a leave of absence from the Times and work on this one—although we should check with [USIA Director] Ed Murrow and Dick Blissell." (Memo, Goodwin to the President and the Attorney General, 11/2/61, p. 2)

³ Szulc made notes of the conversation with President Kennedy as soon as he returned to his office. President Kennedy's question regarding a Castro assassination appears in quotation marks in Szulc's notes, which were made the same day from "reasonably fresh" memory. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 26)

Szulc stated that it is "possible" and he "believed" that President Kennedy used such words as "someone in the intelligence business," to describe the source of the pressure for a Castro assassination. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 29) The President did not specifically identify the source of the pressure. (Szulc, 6/10/75, p. 27)

There is no evidence other than Szulc's testimony that the President was being pressured. This lack of evidence was particularly troublesome since everyone else questioned by the Committee denied ever having discussed assassination with the President, let alone having pressed him to consider it.

Goodwin recalled that, after President Kennedy asked Szulc for his reaction to the suggestion that Castro be assassinated, President Kennedy said, "well, that's the kind of thing I'm never going to do." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 3) Goodwin said that several days after the meeting he referred to the previous discussion of assassination and President Kennedy said "we can't get into that kind of thing, or we would all be targets." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, pp. 4, 11)

D. PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S SPEECH OF NOVEMBER 16, 1961

A few days after the meeting with Szulc and Goodwin, and some six weeks after the issuance of NSAM 100, President Kennedy delivered a speech at the University of Washington, in which he stated:

We cannot, as a free nation, compete with our adversaries in tactics of terror, assassination, false promises, counterfeit mobs and crises. (Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1961, p. 724)

(2) OPERATION MONGOOSE

A. THE CREATION OF OPERATION MONGOOSE

In November 1962 the proposal for a major new covert action program to overthrow Castro was developed. The President's Assistant, Richard Goodwin, and General Edward Lansdale, who was experienced in counter-insurgency operations, played major staff roles in creating this program, which was named Operation MONGOOSE. Goodwin and Lansdale worked closely with Robert Kennedy, who took an active interest in this preparatory stage, and Goodwin advised the President that Robert Kennedy "would be the most effective commander" of the proposed operation. (Memo, Goodwin to the President, 11/1/61, p. 1) In a memorandum to Robert Kennedy outlining the MONGOOSE proposal, Lansdale stated that a "picture of the situation has emerged clearly enough to indicate what needs to be done and to support your sense of urgency concerning Cuba." (Memo. 11/15/61)

At the end of the month, President Kennedy issued a memorandum recording his decision to begin the MONGOOSE project to "use our available assets * * * to help Cuba overthrow the Communist regime." (Memo from the President to the Secretary of State, et al., 11/30/61)

The establishment of Operation MONGOOSE resulted in important organizational changes.

(1) *The Special Group (Augmented) (SGA)*

A new control group, the Special Group (Augmented) (SGA) was created to oversee Operation MONGOOSE. The SGA comprised the regular Special Group members (i.e., McGeorge Bundy, Alexis Johnson of the Department of State, Roswell Gilpatric of the Department of Defense, John McCone, and General Lyman Lemnitzer of the Joint Chiefs) augmented by Attorney General Robert Kennedy and General Maxwell Taylor. Although Secretary of State Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara were not formal members of the Special Group or the Special Group (Augmented), they sometimes attended meetings.

(2) *General Lansdale named Chief-of-Operations of MONGOOSE*

As a result of the Bay of Pigs failure, President Kennedy distrusted the CIA and believed that someone from outside the Agency was required to oversee major covert action programs. Rather than appoint his brother, Robert Kennedy, to head MONGOOSE, as proposed by Goodwin, President Kennedy gave General Edward Lansdale the task of coordinating the CIA's MONGOOSE operations with those of the Departments of State and Defense. Lansdale had developed a reputation in the Philippines and Vietnam for having an ability to deal with revolutionary insurgencies in less developed countries. Kennedy appointed General Taylor Chairman of the Special Group Augmented. Robert Kennedy played an active role in the MONGOOSE Operation, a role unrelated to his position as Attorney General.

(3) *CIA Organization for MONGOOSE*

In late 1961 or early 1962, William Harvey was put in charge of the CIA's Task Force W, the CIA unit for MONGOOSE Operations. Task Force W operated under guidance from the Special Group (Augmented) and employed a total of approximately 400 people at CIA headquarters and its Miami Station. McCone and Harvey were the principal CIA participants in Operation MONGOOSE. Although Helms attended only 7 of the 40 MONGOOSE meetings, he was significantly involved, and he testified that he "was as interested" in MONGOOSE as were Harvey and McCone. (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 10)

B. LANSDALE'S THEORY AND OBJECTIVE FOR MONGOOSE

In the fall of 1961, Landale was asked by President Kennedy to examine the Administration's Cuba policy and to make recommendations. Lansdale testified that he reported to President Kennedy that "Castro * * * had aroused considerable affection for himself personally with the Cuban population * * *" (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 4), and that the United States "should take a very different course" from the "harassment" operations that had been directed against Castro up to that time. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 3) Lansdale informed the President that these prior United States operations were conceived and led by Americans. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 5) In contrast, Lansdale proposed in Operation MONGOOSE that the United States work with exiles, particularly professionals, who had opposed Batista and then became disillusioned with Castro. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, pp. 4, 10-11) Lansdale's ultimate objective was to have "the people themselves overthrow the Castro regime rather than U.S. engineered efforts from outside Cuba." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 41)

Lansdale's concept for Operation MONGOOSE envisioned a first step involving the development of leadership elements and "a very necessary political basis" among the Cubans opposed to Castro. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 11) At the same time, he sought to develop "means to infiltrate Cuba successfully" and to organize "cells and activities inside Cuba * * * who could work secretly and safely." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 11) Lansdale's plan was designed so as not to "arouse premature actions, not to bring great reprisals on the people there and abort any eventual success." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 11)

C. BISSELL'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING PRESIDENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO ACT MORE VIGOROUSLY

According to the Assistant to the head of Task Force W, sometime early in the fall of 1961, Bissell was "chewed out in the Cabinet Room of the White House by both the President and the Attorney General for, as he put it, sitting on his ass and not doing anything about getting rid of Castro and the Castro regime." (Assistant, 6/18/75, p. 8)

The Assistant said Bissell told him about the meeting and directed him to come up with some plans. (Assistant, 6/18/75, pp. 8, 36-37) Bissell did not recall the White House meeting described by the Assistant, but agreed that he had been, in essence, told to "get off your ass about Cuba." (Bissell, 7/25/75, pp. 37-38)

Bissell was asked whether he considered that instruction authority for proceeding to assassinate Castro. He said, no, and that "formal and explicit approval" would be required for assassination activity (*id.*, 38-39). Bissell also said that there was in fact no assassination activity between the pre-Bay of Pigs/Rosselli operation and his departure from the Agency in February 1962.

D. THE JANUARY 19, 1962 SPECIAL GROUP MEETING

On January 19, 1962, a meeting of principal MONGOOSE participants was held in Attorney General Kennedy's office.¹ (McManus, 7/22/75, p. 6) Notes taken at the meeting by George McManus, Helms' Executive Assistant, contain the following passages:

Conclusion Overthrow of Castro is Possible.

"* * * a solution to the Cuban problem today carried top priority in U.S. Government. No time, money, effort—or manpower is to be spared."

"Yesterday * * * the President had indicated to him that the final chapter had not been written—it's got to be done and will be done." (McManus memo 1/19/62, p. 2)

McManus attributed the words "the top priority in the U.S. Government—no time, money, effort or manpower is to be spared" to the Attorney General. (McManus, 7/22/75, pp. 8-9)

Helms stated that those words reflected the "kind of atmosphere" in which he had perceived that assassination was implicitly authorized. (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 60-61) McManus agreed that Robert Kennedy "was very vehement in his speech" and "really wanted action," but

¹ Those attending included the Attorney General, Lansdale, McManus, General Craig, representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Don Wilson of USIA, Major Patchell of the Secretary of Defense's office, and Frank Hand of CIA. It is probable that DDP Helms was also present.

McManus disagreed with Helms' perception, stating that "it never occurred to me" that Kennedy's exhortation included permission to assassinate Castro, Nor did the spirit of the meeting as a whole leave McManus with the impression that assassination was either contemplated or authorized. (McManus, 7/22/75, pp. 9-10) ¹

E. GENERAL LANSDALE'S MONGOOSE PLANNING TASKS

On January 18, 1962, Lansdale assigned 32 planning tasks to the agencies participating in MONGOOSE. In a memorandum to the working group members, Lansdale emphasized that "it is our job to put the American genius to work on this project, quickly and effectively. This demands a change from the business as usual and a hard facing of the fact that we are in a combat situation—where we have been given full command." (Lansdale memorandum, 1/20/62)

The 32 tasks comprised a variety of activities, ranging from intelligence collection to planning for "use of U.S. military force to support the Cuban popular movement" and developing an "operational schedule for sabotage actions inside Cuba."² In focusing on intelligence collection, propaganda, and various sabotage actions, Lansdale's tasks were consistent with the underlying strategy of MONGOOSE to build gradually towards an internal revolt of the Cuban people.

Lansdale transmitted a copy of the tasks to Attorney General Kennedy on January 18, 1962, with a handwritten note stating: "my review does not include the sensitive work I have reported to you; I felt you preferred informing the President privately." Lansdale testified that this sensitive work did not refer to assassinations and that he "never took up assassination with either the Attorney General or the President." He said that he could not precisely recall the nature of this "sensitive work" but that it might have involved a special trip he made under cover to meet Cuban leaders in Florida to assess their political strengths. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 30)

In a memorandum to the Attorney General on January 27, 1962, Lansdale referred to the possibility that "we might uncork the touch-down play independently of the institutional program we are spurring." (Memo, Lansdale to Attorney General, 1/27/62) Lansdale

¹ There was a great deal of evidence showing that Cuba had a high priority in the Kennedy Administration, and the very existence of a high-level group like the Special Group (Augmented) further demonstrated Cuba's importance. McNamara stated that "we were hysterical about Castro at the time of the Bay of Pigs and thereafter." (In the same context, McNamara stated "I don't believe we contemplated assassination.") (McNamara, 7/22/75, p. 93) Similarly, General Lansdale informed the members of his interagency committee that MONGOOSE "demands a change from business-as-usual and a hard facing of the fact that you're in a combat situation where we have been given full command." (Lansdale Memo, 1/20/62)

On the other hand, Theodore Sorensen testified that "there were lots of top priorities, and it was the job of some of [us] to continually tell various agencies their particular subject was the top priority" and although Cuba was "important" it was "fairly well down on the list of the President's agenda." (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 12) For example, when President Kennedy was told that his first letter to Khrushchev in the secret correspondence which lasted two or three years would be "the single most important document you will write during your Presidency," President Kennedy said, "Yes, we get these every day over here." (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 12)

² Parrott sarcastically characterized Lansdale's plans as follows: "I'll give you one example of Lansdale's perspicacity. He had a wonderful plan for getting rid of Castro. This plan consisted of spreading the word that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent and that Christ was against Castro (who) was anti-Christ. And you would spread this word around Cuba, and then on whatever date it was, that there would be a manifestation of this thing. And at that time—this is absolutely true—and at that time just over the horizon there would be an American submarine which would surface off of Cuba and send up some starshells. And this would be the manifestation of the Second Coming and Castro would be overthrown."

Well, some was called this operation, and someone dubbed this, "The Last Days of the Republic."

testified that the phrase "touchdown play" was a "breezy way of referring to a Cuban revolt to overthrow the regime" rather than to Castro's assassination. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 45) The examples of such plays cited in the memorandum (e.g., "stir up workers in Latin America and Cuba," work through "ethnic language groups," "youth elements," or "families through the Church") do not contain any indication of assassination.² (Memo. Lansdale to Attorney General, 1/27/62, p. 1)

On January 19, 1962, Lansdale added an additional task to those assigned on January 18. "Task 33" involved a plan to "incapacitate" Cuban sugar workers during the harvest by the use of chemical warfare means. Lansdale testified that the plan involved using nonlethal chemicals to sicken Cubans temporarily and keep them away from the fields for a 24-48 hour period "without ill effects." The task was initially approved for planning purposes with the notation that it would require "policy determination" before final approval. After a study showed the plan to be unfeasible, it was cancelled without ever being submitted to the SGA for debate. (Lansdale, 7/8/75 p. 29; SGA Minutes, 1/30/62, p. 1)

The SGA approved Lansdale's 33 tasks for planning purposes on January 30, 1962. (SGA Minutes, 1/30/62, p. 1) On February 20, Lansdale detailed a six-phase schedule for MONGOOSE, designed to culminate in October, 1962, with an "open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime." (Lansdale Memorandum, 2/20/62, p. 2) As one of the operations for this "Resistance" phase, Lansdale listed "attacks on the cadre of the regime, including key leaders." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 151) Lansdale's plan stated:

This should be a "Special Target" operation * * * Gangster elements might provide the best recruitment potential for actions against police—G2 [intelligence] officials. (Id., p. 151) *

¹ The testimony was as follows:

The CHAIRMAN. What precisely did you mean by "uncork the touchdown play independently of the institutional programs we are spurring?"

General LANSDALE. Well, I was holding almost daily meetings with my working group, and—in tasking, and finding how they were developing plans I was becoming more and more concerned that they kept going back to doing what I felt were *pro forma* American types of actions rather than actively exploring how to get the Cubans into this, and to have them undertake actions.

To me, the touchdown play was a Cuban revolt to overthrow the regime. I did not feel that we had gotten into the real internal part of getting Cubans into the action, and I was concerned about that.

Senator BAKER. In the same context, it is fair to say that the name of the game was to get rid of Castro or his regime and that touchdown play was one of several methods that might have been used for that purpose?

General LANSDALE. Yes.

Senator BAKER. All right, now what was the touchdown play that you had in mind here?

General LANSDALE. Well, it was a revolt by the Cubans themselves * * * a revolution that would break down the police controls of the state and to drive the top people out of power and to do that, there needed to be political actions cells, psychological propaganda action cells, and eventually when possible, guerrilla forces developed in the country in a safe place for a new government to set up and direct the revolution that would eventually move into Havana and take over. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, pp. 45-56)

² Lansdale's memorandum described the "touchdown play" as follows:

"It may be a special effort which professional labor operators can launch to stir up workers in Latin America and Cuba. It may be through ethnic-language groups; Spain has an untapped action potential. It could be a warming-up of the always lively youth element in Latin America and Cuba, through some contacts specially used. It could be with the families through the Church, with families resisting the disciplined destruction of social justice by the Communists. It could be an imaginative defection project which cracks the top echelon of the Communist gang now running Cuba." (Memorandum, Lansdale to Attorney General, 1/27/62)

* An earlier reference to use of gangster-type elements had appeared in a CIA memorandum for the SGA on January 24, 1962. Commenting on Task 5 of Lansdale's original 32 tasks (which called for planning for "defection of top Cuban government officials"), the CIA memorandum noted that planning for the task will "necessarily be based upon an appeal made inside the island by intermediaries" and listed "crime syndicates" along with other groups as possible intermediaries. (CIA Memorandum, 1/24/62)

Lansdale testified that early in the MONGOOSE operation he had suggested that working level representatives of the MONGOOSE agencies get in touch with "criminal elements" to obtain intelligence and for "possible actions against the police structure" in Cuba. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 104) Lansdale conceded that his proposal to recruit gangster elements for attacks on "key leaders" contemplated the targeted killing of individuals, in addition to the casualties that might occur in the course of the revolt itself. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 107)

Lansdale's 33 plans were never approved for implementation by the SGA. As discussed below, the SGA tabled Lansdale's six phase plan altogether in February 1962, and directed him to plan for and conduct an intelligence collection plan only. (SGA Minutes, 3/5/62)

F. LANSDALE'S REJECTION OF A SUGGESTION THAT A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING REWARDS FOR ASSASSINATION, BE EXPLORED

On January 30, 1962, the representative of the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs on the MONGOOSE Working Group forwarded for Lansdale's consideration "a concept for creating distrust and apprehension in the Cuban Communist Hierarchy." (Memo, Craig to Lansdale, 1/30/62) The concept titled Operation Bounty, was described as a "system of financial rewards, commensurate with position and stature, for killing or delivering alive known Communists." Under the concept, leaflets would be dropped in Cuba listing rewards, which ranged from \$5,000 for an "informer" to \$100,000 for "government officials." A reward of "2¢" was listed for Castro. Lansdale testified that the 2¢ bounty was designed "to denigrate * * * Castro in the eyes of the Cuban population." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 26) Lansdale said that he "tabled" this concept when he received it because "I did not think that it was something that should be seriously undertaken or supported further." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 26) He never brought Operation Bounty before the SGA.

G. THE CONTROL SYSTEM FOR MONGOOSE OPERATIONS

In establishing the MONGOOSE Operation on November 30, 1961, President Kennedy had emphasized that the SGA should be "kept closely informed" of its activities. (Memorandum by the President, 11/30/61)

In practice, as Harvey's Executive Assistant on the CIA MONGOOSE Task Force W testified, this resulted in the submission of "specific detailed plans for every activity carried out by the task force." (Assistant, 6/18/75, p. 16) The Assistant testified that those plans were submitted "in nauseating detail."

It went down to such things as the gradients on the beach, and the composition of the sand on the beach in many cases. Every single solitary thing was in those plans, full details, times, events, weaponry, how it was going to happen, who was going to do what * * * the full details of every single thing we did. (Assistant, 6/18/75, p. 17)

Harvey also characterized the control process as requiring the submission of "excruciating detail." It was understood that the SGA was to be given an opportunity to debate proposals and to decide after weighing their strengths and weaknesses. (Harvey, 6/25/75, pp. 114, 123-124)

The documentary evidence further illustrates the SGA's tight control procedures for MONGOOSE. For example, after Lansdale submitted his 33 tasks and his overall concept for MONGOOSE for SGA consideration in January, he was ordered to cut back his plan and limit it to an intelligence collection program for the March-May 1962 period, rather than the five-stage plan culminating in an October "popular revolution," as originally conceived by Lansdale. (Memo 3/2/62, by Lansdale) In approving the modified intelligence collection plan, the SGA pointed out that:

*** any actions which are not specifically spelled out in the plan but seem to be desirable as the project progresses, will be brought to the Special Group for resolution. (SGA Minutes, 1962)

In addition, the Guidelines for the MONGOOSE program emphasized the SGA's responsibility for control and prior approval of important operations:

The SGA is responsible for providing policy guidance to the [MONGOOSE] project, for approving important operations and for monitoring progress. (Guidelines for Operation MONGOOSE, March 14, 1962)

The SGA request for Helms to estimate "for each week as far into the next twelve months as possible *** the numbers and type of agents you will establish inside Cuba *** [and] brief descriptions *** of actions contemplated," is another example of the close control the SGA exercised over Operation MONGOOSE. (Memo, Lansdale to Helms, 3/5/62) Any proposal to supply arms and equipment to particular resistance groups inside Cuba was also required to "be submitted to the Special Group (Augmented) for decision *ad hoc*." (Lansdale Memo to the Special Group, 4/11/62, p. 1) These procedural requirements were operative at the time of Harvey's meeting with Rosselli in Miami.

The Guidelines for Operation MONGOOSE stated:

During this period, General Lansdale will continue as Chief of Operations, calling directly on the participating departments and agencies for support and implementation of agreed tasks. The heads of these departments and agencies are responsible for performance through normal command channels to higher authority.¹ (Guideline for Operation MONGOOSE, 3/14/62)

Harvey complained to McCone about the SGA control requirement for advance approval of "major operations going beyond the collection of intelligence." He stated that:

To permit requisite flexibility and professionalism for a maximum operational effort against Cuba, the tight controls exercised by the Special Group and the present time-consuming coordination and briefing procedures should, if at all possible, be made less restrictive and less stultifying. (Memo, Harvey to McCone, 4/10/62)

¹ The initial draft of these Guidelines had referred to the President, but was later amended to read "higher authority." (Draft Guidelines, 3/5/62, p. 2) The minutes of the consideration of these Guidelines were also amended with respect to the manner in which the Guidelines were approved. A Memorandum for Record, entitled "Discussion of Operation MONGOOSE with the President," stated:

"In the presence of the Special Group (Augmented) the President was given a progress report on Operation MONGOOSE. The Guidelines dated March 14, 1962 were circulated and were used as the basis of the discussion. After a prolonged consideration of the visibility, noise level and risks entailed, General Lansdale and the Special Group (Augmented) were given tacit authorization to proceed in accordance with the Guidelines." (SGA Memo for the Record, 3/16/62)

A note, dated March 22, 1962, appeared on the bottom of this memorandum and stated:

"This minute was read to the Special Group (Augmented) today. The Group was unanimous in feeling that no authorization, either tacit or otherwise, was given by higher authority. The members of the Group asked that the minute be amended to indicate that the Group was not authorized to proceed in accordance with the Guidelines."

Even as the Cuban Missile Crisis approached, and the increasing pressure to act against the Castro regime led to a "stepped-up" MONGOOSE plan, the SGA continued to require that all sensitive operations be submitted to it for advance approval. For example, when the SGA approved in principle a proposed set of operations on September 14, 1962, Bundy

*** made it clear that this did not constitute a blanket approval of every item in the paper and that sensitive ones such as sabotage, for example, will have to be presented in more detail on a case by case basis. (Memo of SGA Meeting, 9/14/62, p. 1)

Helms and the members of the SGA differed on whether or not these control requirements were consistent with Helms' perception that assassination was permissible without a direct order. That testimony is discussed in subsection (3), *infra*.

H. THE PATTERN OF MONGOOSE ACTION

The Kennedy Administration pressed the MONGOOSE operation with vigorous language. Although the collection of intelligence information was the central objective of MONGOOSE until August 1962, sabotage and paramilitary actions were also conducted,¹ including a major sabotage operation aimed at a large Cuban copper mine. Lansdale described the sabotage acts as involving "blowing up bridges to stop communications and blowing up certain production plants." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 36) During the Missile Crisis in the fall of 1962, sabotage was increasingly urged.

Despite the Administration's urgings, the SGA shied away from sabotage and other violent action throughout 1962, including the period of the Missile Crisis. Helms noted in a memorandum of a meeting on October 16, 1962, that Robert Kennedy, in expressing the "general dissatisfaction of the President" with MONGOOSE, "pointed out that [MONGOOSE] had been underway for a year *** that there had been no acts of sabotage and that even the one which had been attempted had failed twice." (Memo by Helms, 10/16/62) A memorandum to Helms from his Executive Assistant (who spent full time on Cuba matters) reviewed the MONGOOSE program in the aftermath of the Missile Crisis, and stated:

During the past year, while one of the options of the project was to create internal dissension and resistance leading to eventual U.S. intervention, a review shows that policymakers not only shied away from the military intervention aspect but were generally apprehensive of sabotage proposals. (Memo to Helms, 10/16/62)

Harvey concurred in this SGA assessment. MONGOOSE documents bear out the operation's emphasis on intelligence gathering. The only phase of Lansdale's six-phase plan approved for January through August 1962 was described by Lansdale as "essentially an intelligence

¹ In early March 1962, the SGA recognized the need to begin "preliminary actions *** involving such things as spotting, assessing and training action-type agents" but the SGA agreed that it must "keep its hand tightly" on these actions. The SGA saw, however, that such control might not be completely effective and recognized that many of the agents infiltrated into Cuba would be of an all-purpose type; that is, they would be trained in paramilitary skills, as well as those of exclusively intelligence concern. It was noted that once the agents are within the country, they cannot be effectively controlled from the U.S., although every effort will be made to attempt such control." (SGA Minutes, 3/5/62)

collection" effort. (Lansdale Memo 4/11/62) The MONGOOSE Guidelines approved on March 5, 1962, stated that the acquisition of intelligence was the "immediate priority objective of U.S. efforts in the coming months." (Guidelines for Operation MONGOOSE, 3/14/62) While the Guidelines did state that covert actions would be undertaken concurrently with intelligence collection, these were to be on a scale "short of those reasonably calculated to inspire a revolt" in Cuba. The SGA stipulated that MONGOOSE action beyond the acquisition of intelligence "must be inconspicuous." (Lansdale Memo, 3/2/62)

After the intelligence collection phase ended in August 1962, the SGA considered whether to adopt a "stepped-up Course B plus," which, in contrast to Phase I, was designed to inspire a revolt against the Castro regime. (Memo for the SGA from Lansdale, 8/8/62) The SGA initially decided against this course and in favor of a "CIA variant" on August 10, 1962. (Minutes of SGA Meeting, 8/10/62) The "CIA variant," which was proposed by McCone, posted limited actions to avoid inciting a revolt and sought a split between Castro and "old-line Communists" rather than Castro's overthrow.

On August 20, Taylor told the President that the SGA saw no likelihood that Castro's Government would be overturned by internal means without direct United States military intervention, and that the SGA favored a more aggressive MONGOOSE program.¹ (Memo, Taylor to the President, 8/20/62) On August 23, McGeorge Bundy issued NSC Memorandum No. 181, which stated that, at the President's directive, "the line of activity projected for Operation MONGOOSE Plan B plus should be developed with all possible speed." On August 30, the SGA instructed the CIA to submit a list of possible sabotage targets and noted that: "The Group, by reacting to this list, could define the limits within which the Agency could operate on its own initiative." (Minutes of 8/30/62)

The onset of the Cuban Missile Crisis initially caused a reversion to the stepped-up Course B plan. At an SGA meeting on October 4, 1962, Robert Kennedy stated that the President "is concerned about progress on the MONGOOSE program and feels that more priority should be given to trying to mount sabotage operations." The Attorney General urged that "massive activity" be undertaken within the MONGOOSE framework. In response to this proposal, the SGA decided that "considerably more sabotage" should be undertaken, and that "all efforts should be made to develop new and imaginative approaches with the possibility of getting rid of the Castro regime." (Minutes of SGA Meeting, 10/14/62, p. 3)² However, on October 30,

¹ There are references in the SGA records to attacks on Soviet personnel in Cuba. The record of the SGA meeting on September 9, 1962, states: "It was suggested that the matter of attacking and harassing of Soviet personnel within Cuba should be considered." (SGA Minutes, 9/9/62)

Earlier, on August 31, 1962, Lansdale had included a task "to provoke incidents between Cubans and Bloc personnel to exacerbate tensions" in a proposed projection of action for Phase II of MONGOOSE. (Memo to SGA, Action No. 47, 8/31/62) The Special Group thereafter decided, as a means of "emphasizing such activity," to replace that task with one to "cause actions by Cubans against Bloc personnel," and to note that "cooperation will be given to provoking and conducting physical attacks on Bloc personnel." (Memo to Taylor, Rusk, and McNamara, from Lansdale, 9/12/62, pp. 1-2)

² The SGA also decided on October 4, 1962, that Robert Kennedy would chair the Group's meetings "for the time being." (*Id.*, p. 3.) Subsequently, at a meeting on October 16, 1962 Robert Kennedy stated that he was going to give MONGOOSE "more personal attention" in view of the lack of progress and would hold daily meetings with the working group representatives, i.e., Lansdale, Harvey, and the other Agency members. (Memo of Meeting by Helms, 10/16/62, p. 1) Helms testified that he did not recall any such daily meeting with the Attorney General. He had the impression there may have been several at first.

1962, the Special Group (Augmented) ordered a halt to all sabotage operations. (Lansdale Memo for the record, 10/30/62)¹

Theodore Sorensen, a member of the Executive Committee established to deal with the Missile Crisis, testified that Cuba was the "No. 1 priority" during the Crisis. He said that although "all alternatives, plans, possibilities were exhaustively surveyed" during that time, the subject of assassination was never raised in the National Security Council or the Executive Committee. (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 11)

(3) EVIDENCE BEARING ON KNOWLEDGE OF AND AUTHORIZATION FOR THE ASSASSINATION PLOT, PHASE II

As discussed below, both Helms and the high Kennedy Administration officials who testified agreed that no direct order was ever given for Castro's assassination and that no senior Administration officials, including McCone, were informed about the assassination activity. Helms testified, however, that he believed the assassination activity was permissible and that it was within the scope of authority given to the Agency. McCone and other Kennedy Administration officials disagreed, testifying that assassination was impermissible without a direct order and that Castro's assassination was not within the bounds of the MONGOOSE operation.

As DDP, Helms was in charge of covert operations when the poison pills were given to Rosselli in Miami in April 1962. Helms had succeeded to this post following Bissell's retirement in February 1962. He testified that after the Bay of Pigs:

Those of us who were still [in the Agency] were enormously anxious to try and be successful at what we were being asked to do by what was then a relatively new Administration. We wanted to earn our spurs with the President and with other officers of the Kennedy Administration. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 4)

A. HELMS' TESTIMONY CONCERNING AUTHORITY

Helms testified that he doubted that he was informed when Harvey gave poison pills to Rosselli and that he did not recall having authorized Castro's assassination by that means. He said, however, that he had authorized that assassination plot because "we felt that we were operating as we were supposed to operate, that these things if not specifically authorized, at least were authorized in general terms." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 61)

(1) *Helms' Perception of Authority*

Helms testified that the "intense" pressure exerted by the Kennedy Administration to overthrow Castro had led him to perceive that the OIA was acting within the scope of its authority in attempting

¹ Harvey testified that he had a "confrontation" with Robert Kennedy at the height of the Missile Crisis concerning Harvey's order that agent teams be sent into Cuba to support any conventional U.S. military operation that might occur. Harvey stated that Robert Kennedy "took a great deal of exception" to this order and, as a result, McCone ordered Harvey to stop the agent operations (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 80-81). Elder, McCone's assistant at the time, similarly described this incident and stated that, although Harvey had attempted to get guidance from top officials during the Missile Crisis, Harvey "earned another black mark as not being fully under control." (Elder, 8/13/75, pp. 34-35)

Castro's assassination, even though assassination was never directly ordered.¹ He said:

I believe it was the policy at the time to get rid of Castro and if killing him was one of the things that was to be done in this connection, that was within what was expected. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 137)

I remember vividly [the pressure to overthrow Castro] was very intense. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 26)

Helms stated that this pressure intensified during the period of Operation MONGOOSE and continued through much of 1963. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 27) As the pressure increased, "obviously the extent of the means that one thought were available * * * increased too." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 26)

Helms recalled that during the MONGOOSE period, "it was made abundantly clear * * * to everybody involved in the operation that the desire was to get rid of the Castro regime and to get rid of Castro * * * the point was that no limitations were put on this injunction." (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 16-17)

Senator MATHIAS. Let me draw an example from history. When Thomas Beckett was proving to be an annoyance, as Castro, the King said who will rid me of this man. He didn't say to somebody, go out and murder him. He said who will rid me of this man, and let it go at that.

Mr. HELMS. That is a warming reference to the problem.

Senator MATHIAS. You feel that spans the generations and the centuries?

Mr. HELMS. I think it does, sir.

Senator MATHIAS. And that is typical of the kind of thing which might be said, which might be taken by the Director or by anybody else as Presidential authorization to go forward?

Mr. HELMS. That is right. But in answer to that, I realize that one sort of grows up in [the] tradition of the time and I think that any of us would have found it very difficult to discuss assassinations with a President of the U.S. I just think we all had the feeling that we're hired out to keep those things out of the Oval Office.

Senator MATHIAS. Yet at the same time you felt that some spark had been transmitted, that that was within the permissible limits?

Mr. HELMS. Yes, and if he had disappeared from the scene they would not have been unhappy. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 72-73)

Helms said that he was never told by his superiors to kill Castro, (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 15) but that:

No member of the Kennedy Administration * * * ever told me that [assassination] was proscribed, [or] ever referred to it in that fashion * * *. Nobody ever said that [assassination] was ruled out * * * (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 18, 43)²

Helms said that the delivery of poison pills for assassinating Castro: "with all the other things that were going on at that time * * * seemed to be within the permissible part of this effort * * *. In the perceptions of the time and the things we were trying to do this was one human life against many other human lives that were being lost." (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 64, 99)³

¹ The extent to which pressure in fact existed "to do something about Castro" is discussed in detail in the section immediately above dealing with Operation MONGOOSE, its strategy of causing an internal revolt of the Cuban people against Castro, the strict control system established by the Special Group Augmented, and the pattern of intelligence collection and sabotage activity actually authorized and undertaken.

² Helms testified: "In my 25 years in the Central Intelligence Agency, I always thought I was working within authorization, that I was doing what I had been asked to do by proper authority and when I was operating on my own I was doing what I believed to be the legitimate business of the Agency as it would have been expected of me." (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 30-31)

³ Helms elaborated: " * * * people were losing their lives in raids, a lot of people had lost their life at the Bay of Pigs, agents were being arrested left and right and put before the wall and shot." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 64)

(2) *Helms' Testimony Concerning the Absence of a Direct Order and Why He Did Not Inform Administration Officials*

Helms testified that there was no direct order to assassinate Castro. He said that his perceptions of authority did not reach the point where he could testify that he had specific instructions to kill Castro. Helms told the Committee:

I have testified as best I could about the atmosphere of the time, what I understood was desired, and I don't want to take refuge in saying that I was instructed to specifically murder Castro * * *. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 88)

When asked if President Kennedy had been informed of any assassination plots, Helms pointed out that "nobody wants to embarrass a President of the United States by discussing the assassination of foreign leaders in his presence." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 29) He added that the Special Group was "the mechanism that was set up * * * to use as a circuit breaker so that these things did not explode in the President's face and that he was not held responsible for them." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 29) He said that he had "no knowledge that a Castro assassination was ever authorized" by the SGA. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 28-29)

Helms testified that he never informed the SGA or any of its members that Harvey had given the pills to Rosselli in Miami "because to this day I do not recall Harvey ever having told me they were passed." (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 22)

(3) *Helms' Perception of Robert Kennedy's Position on Assassination*

Helms emphasized that Robert Kennedy continually pressed for tangible results in the MONGOOSE effort.¹ He testified:

I can say absolutely fairly we were constantly in touch with each other in these matters. The Attorney General was on the phone to me, he was on the phone to Mr. Harvey, to Mr. Fitzgerald, his successor. He was on the phone even to people on Harvey's staff, as I recall it. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 13)²

¹ Q. So it was your impression that he was sort of setting the tone for the group's action or activity.

"A. Oh, yes * * * there wasn't any doubt about that. He was very much interested in this and spent a great deal of time on it." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 22)

² The telephone records of the Attorney General's office indicate frequent contact between the Attorney General and Helms. Helms stated that his conversations with Robert Kennedy were "candid" and that "he and I used to deal in facts most of the time." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 83) Helms testified about the detail of his talks with Robert Kennedy:

"For example, we had projects to land sabotage teams. Well, (the Attorney General would ask) have you got the team organized, did the team go? Well, no, we've been delayed a week because the weather is bad or the boats don't run, or something of this kind. It even got down to that degree of specificity." (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 40)

An official in the Western Hemisphere Division of the Directorate of Plans who was responsible for evaluating potential Cuban assets testified that in June or July 1962, he was told by his superior [either Harvey or Harvey's assistant] "go see the Attorney General, he has something to talk about" (Official, 9/18/75, p. 28). The official said that he went to the Justice Department and was told by the Attorney General that: "He wanted to see a man who had contact with a small group of Cubans who had a plan for creating an insurrection, or something like that * * *" (Official, 9/18/75, p. 30)

The contact recommended by the Attorney General, referred the official to five or six Cubans who claimed to have connections within Cuba and who requested weapons, money, and supplies to start an insurrection. The official said he reported to the Attorney General that the Cubans did not have a concrete plan; the Attorney General rejected the official's evaluation and ordered him to go to Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba "using whatever assets we could get to make contact with people inside Cuba, and start working and developing this particular group." (Official, 9/18/75, p. 34) When the official protested that the CIA had agreed not to work out of Guantanamo, the Attorney General responded, "we will see about that." The official said that he then reported his conversation with the Attorney General to Harvey, who replied: "There was a meeting about that this morning. I forgot to tell you about it. I will take care of it * * *" (Official, 9/18/75, p. 35) The official said that he had no further contact with the Attorney General or the Cubans.

During one appearance before the Committee, Helms was asked by the Chairman:

The CHAIRMAN. Since he [Kennedy] was on the phone to you repeatedly did he ever tell you to kill Castro?

Mr. HELMS. No.

The CHAIRMAN. He did not?

Mr. HELMS. Not in those words, no. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 13)¹

Helms testified that he had never told Attorney General Kennedy about any assassination activity. He assumed that "he wasn't informed by anyone." and added that "Harvey kept phase 2 [the Rosselli plot] pretty much in his back pocket" (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 57-58). Helms also said that the Attorney General had never told him that assassination was ruled out. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 13) He added that he did not know if Castro's assassination would have been morally unacceptable to the Attorney General, but he believed that Robert Kennedy "would not have been unhappy if [Castro] had disappeared off the scene by whatever means." (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 17-18)

(4) Helms' Testimony as to Why he Did Not Obtain a Direct Order

Helms testified that assassination "was not part of the CIA's policy" and was not part of its "armory." (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 87-88) Helms said that he "never liked assassination," and banned its use five years after he became Director of Central Intelligence. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 166) Helms also testified to his "very grave doubts about the wisdom" of dealing with underworld figures when Harvey proposed contacting Rosselli to see if gangster links to Cuba could be developed. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 33; 7/18/75, p. 31)

Despite these reservations, Helms did not seek approval for the assassination activity. He said this was because assassination was not a subject which should be aired with higher authority. (Helms, 7/18/75, pp. 31-32) Specifically, he said he did not seek SGA approval because:

I didn't see how one would have expected that a thing like killing or murdering or assassination would become a part of a large group of people sitting around a table in the United States Government. (Helms, 7/17/75, p. 14)

His unwillingness "to embarrass a President of the United States [by] discussing the assassination of foreign leaders in his presence" has already been noted. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 29)

Helms gave additional testimony in response to questions concerning his failure to seek explicit authorization for assassination activity.

Senator HUDDLESTON. * * * it did not occur to you to inquire of the Attorney General or of the Special Group or of anyone that when they kept pushing and asking for action * * * to clarify that question of whether you should actually be trying to assassinate?

Mr. HELMS. I don't know whether it was in training, experience, tradition or exactly what one points to, but I think to go up to a Cabinet officer and say, am

¹ Helms immediately reiterated that his perception of authority for Castro's assassination derived from the pressure exerted by the Administration against Castro. The exchange between the Chairman and Helms continued as follows:

"The CHAIRMAN. Well, did he ever tell you in other words that clearly conveyed to you the message that he wanted to kill Castro?"

"HELMS. Sir, the last time I was here [before the Committee], I did the best I could about what I believed to be the parameters under which we were working, and that was to get rid of Castro. I can't imagine any Cabinet officer wanting to sign off on something like that. I can't imagine anybody wanting something in writing saying I have just charged Mr. Jones to go out and shoot Mr. Smith." (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 13-14)

I right in assuming that you want me to assassinate Castro or to try to assassinate Castro, is a question it wouldn't have occurred to me to ask.

Senator HUDDLESTON. * * * [because assassination has such serious consequences] it seems to fortify the thought that I would want to be dead certain, I would want to hear it from the horse's mouth in plain, simple English language before I would want to undertake that kind of activity." (Helms, 7/17/75, pp. 51-52)

"Senator MORGAN. In light of your previous statement that this is a Christian country and that this Committee has to face up to the prime moral issue of whether or not killing is * * * acceptable * * * don't you think it would have taken affirmative permission or authority to kill, rather than just saying it was not eliminated from the authority or you were not restricted * * * ?

"Mr. HELMS. * * * killing was not part of the CIA's policy. It was not part of the CIA's armory * * * but in this Castro operation * * * I have testified as best I could about the atmosphere of the time, what I understood was desired [and] that this was getting rid of Castro, if he had been gotten rid of by this means that this would have been acceptable to certain individuals * * * I was just doing my best to do what I thought I was supposed to do." (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 87-88)

When asked why he had not sought clarification from the Special Group, its members, or Robert Kennedy as to whether it was "in fact, the policy of the Government to actually kill Fidel Castro," Helms answered,

I don't know * * * There is something about the whole chain of episodes in connection with this Rosselli business that I am simply not able to bring back in a coherent fashion. And there was something about the ineffectuality of all this, or the lack of conviction that anything ever happened, that I believe in the end made this thing simply collapse, disappear. And I don't recall what I was briefed on at the time. Maybe I was kept currently informed and maybe I wasn't, and today I don't remember it * * * But I do not recall ever having been convinced that any attempt was really made on Castro's life. And since I didn't believe any attempt had been made on Castro's life, I saw no reason to pursue the matter further. (Helms, 7/18/75, pp. 31-32)

(5) *Helms' Perception of the Relation of Special Group Controls to Assassination Activity*

Helms stated that the SGA's control system for MONGOOSE was not intended to apply to assassination activity. (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 21) Helms stated that the SGA's decision on March 5, 1962, that major operations going beyond the collection of intelligence must receive advance approval referred to "rather specific items that the Special Group had on its agenda" from the outset of MONGOOSE (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 21) Helms said that since assassination was not among those items, the SGA would not have expected assassination activity to come within its purview. (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 21) As to the SGA's stated desire to "keep its hands tightly on preliminary actions" leading towards sabotage and other covert activity, Helms characterized it as the kind of injunction "that appears in all kinds of governmental minutes of meetings." (Helms, 7/18/75, pp. 16-17)

Helms stated that although there were "no limitations" on actions to remove Castro during MONGOOSE, there were restraints on sabotage operations. He did not understand the absence of specific limitations to authorize more drastic actions, such as committing the United States military to an invasion of Cuba. (Helms, 7/18/75, p. 9)¹

¹ Helms testified that, although loss of life was implicit in the MONGOOSE operations, "I think there was an effort made not to take tacks that would recklessly kill a lot of people and not achieve very much. I think there was an effort, if you had a sabotage operation, not to throw a lot of hand grenades into a city, but rather take out the names

B. HARVEY'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING AUTHORITY

(1) Harvey's Perception of Authority

Harvey stressed that he was a line officer reporting to the DDP, his immediate superior within the Agency. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 83) He pointed out that his information about authorization from outside the agency came from the DDP:

[A]t no time during this entire period * * * did I ever personally believe or have any feeling that I was either free-wheeling or end-running or engaging in any activity that was not in response to a considered, decided U.S. policy, properly approved, admittedly, perhaps, through channels and at levels I personally had no involvement in, or first-hand acquaintance with, and did not consider it at that point my province to, if you will, cross-examine either the Deputy Director or the Director concerning it. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 83)

Harvey stated that he believed that authorization for the 1962 assassination activity carried over from the period when Allen Dulles was DCI. He based his belief on statements made to him by Bissell. On the question of McCone's knowledge or authorization, the following exchange occurred between Harvey and the Chairman:

The CHAIRMAN. That doesn't necessarily mean that because the previous director had knowledge that Mr. McCone had knowledge. It is not like a covenant that runs in the land.

Mr. HARVEY. No, of course not, and they don't always brief their successors. (Harvey, 6/25/75, p. 85)

(2) Harvey and the Special Group (Augmented)

During the MONGOOSE period, Harvey attended many SGA meetings as the CIA's representative. He testified that he never informed the SGA or any of its members of the ongoing assassination plots and that at no time was assassination discussed at any meetings, except the one on August 10, 1962.¹

Early in 1962, Harvey was appointed chief of Task Force W, CIA's action arm for MONGOOSE activities. In the latter part of April 1962, Harvey went to Miami where the CIA had its JM/WAVE station. Harvey testified that in addition to meeting with Rosselli and delivering the poison pills, his trip had other purposes totally unrelated to assassination:

"* * * this was one of a number of periodic trips for the purpose of reviewing in toto * * * the actual and potential operations at the Miami base * * * and this covered the whole gamut from personnel administration, operational support in the way of small craft [and] so on * * *." (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 15-16)

The SGA expected to receive a report from Harvey on his April trip to Miami. While Harvey was still in Miami, Lansdale told the SGA that:

"Upon the return of Mr. Harvey from his current field visit, more specific information on the status of agent training and operations should be made available." (Memorandum for the SGA, 4/19/62, p. 2)

On April 26, 1962, Lansdale told the SGA that Harvey was in Florida "initiating a new series of agent infiltrations" and would return to Washington on April 30. (Memo for the SGA, 4/26/62, from Lansdale) At an SGA meeting on April 26, General Taylor requested that Harvey "attend the next meeting and report on agent activities."

¹ This meeting and the testimony concerning it is treated in depth in the section, *infra*, pp. 161-169.

(Memo for the Record, April 26, 1962, by McCone) The next day, McCone's assistant sent Harvey a memorandum informing him of General Taylor's request and notifying him that McCone wanted to meet with Harvey and Lansdale "immediately on your return to discuss the Task Force activities." (Memo for Action, Elder to Harvey, 4/27/62)

Harvey reported to the SGA as requested. He testified that he did not inform the SGA, or any individual outside the Agency, that he had given the poison pills to Rosselli. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 16) Harvey said he did not tell McCone about the poison pills when he briefed the Director because he did not believe it was necessary. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 17)¹

Harvey gave a progress report to the SGA on "agent teams" and the "general field of intelligence" when he reported to them following his trip to Miami. (Memo of SGA Meeting, 5/3/62) According to the minutes, Harvey reported that three agent teams had been infiltrated and that 72 actual or potential reporting sources were also in the place. The minutes of the May 3, 1962, SGA meeting make no mention of Harvey's assassination activities.

Shortly after the May 3 meeting, General Taylor gave the President what Taylor called a "routine briefing." (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 27) General Taylor's memorandum of that briefing makes no reference to Harvey's contacts with Rosselli or the delivery of pills and guns. (Memo for Record, May 7, 1962, by General Taylor) Taylor testified that he had never heard of Harvey's delivering pills to poison Castro, or of any assassination attempts. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 42)

C. TESTIMONY OF KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS

The Committee took testimony from the Kennedy Administration officials principally involved in the MONGOOSE operation, all of whom testified that the assassination plots were not authorized. Their testimony focused on whether any authority for a Castro assassination existed, whether they had knowledge of any Castro assassination activity, and whether it was probable that Robert Kennedy might have given Helms an assassination order through a "back channel."²

McCone, who testified that he had never been informed of the assassination plots, said that neither President Kennedy, Attorney General Kennedy, nor any of the Cabinet or White House staff ever discussed with him any plans or operations to assassinate Castro. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 44)

McCone said that although the Cuban problem was discussed in terms of "dispose of Castro," or "knock off Castro," those terms were meant to refer to "the overthrow of the Communist Government in Cuba," and not to assassination. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 44; Memo to Helms, April 14, 1967)

¹ Harvey explained his failure to brief the SGA in the following exchange:

"Q. . . . Did you believe that the White House did not want the Special Group to know?
 "HARVEY. Well, I would have had no basis for that belief, but I would have felt that if the White House [tasked] this [operation to the CIA] and wanted the Special Group to know about it, it was up to the White House to brief the Special Group and not up to me to brief them, and I would have considered that I would have been very far out of line and would have been subject to severe censure." (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 77)

² In one of Helms' subsequent appearances before the Committee he testified that Robert Kennedy never gave him such an order.

McCone told the Committee that "it is very hard for me to believe" that Robert Kennedy would have initiated an assassination effort against Castro without consulting the SGA. (McCone, 1975 p. 52)

Taylor served as Chairman of the SGA during the MONGOOSE Operation (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 12), and as President Kennedy's Military Representative and Intelligence Advisor after the Bay of Pigs until his appointment as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November 1962. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 11; Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 25) He testified that a plan to assassinate Castro was "never" submitted to the SGA, either orally or in writing. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 41) He said the SGA was never told of the poison pills given to Rosselli in April 1962, and that the passage of those pills without the knowledge of the SGA was "entirely, completely out of [the] context and character of the way the [SGA] operated or the way it would accept" that an operation was properly authorized. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 43) Taylor testified that although the SGA was "certainly anxious for the downfall of Castro," an "assassination never came up" at its meetings. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 62)

Taylor stated "the President and the Attorney General would never have gone around" the SGA to deal with Helms or other CIA officials in planning an assassination. (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 49) To have done so would have been "entirely contradictory to every method of operation I ever saw on the part of the President and his brother." (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 45) Taylor acknowledged that Robert Kennedy frequently pushed for more direct action during MONGOOSE, but said that "there was no suggestion [of] assassination." (Taylor, 7/9/75, p. 67) He testified that Robert Kennedy dealt directly with Lansdale outside SGA channels "only for the purpose of imparting his own sense of urgency," but "never" would have done so on substantive issues.¹

In General Lansdale's appearance before the Committee, the following exchange occurred:

THE CHAIRMAN. You do not recall ever having discussed with the Attorney General a plan or a proposal to assassinate Fidel Castro?

General LANSDALE. No. And I am very certain Senator, that such a discussion never came up * * * neither with the Attorney General nor the President." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 18)²

Lansdale said that he had not discussed assassination with the President or the President's brother because he "had doubts" that assassination was a "useful action, and one which I had never employed in the past, during work in coping with revolutions, and I had con-

¹ The evidence showed, however, that there were occasions when the Attorney General dealt with officials involved in MONGOOSE without consulting General Taylor. For example (as discussed in detail in the section on MONGOOSE operations), on January 18, 1962, General Lansdale sent a copy of his MONGOOSE program review to Robert Kennedy with a cover memorandum indicating that other "sensitive work" not in the review was to be dealt with by the President, the Attorney General, and Lansdale only. The nature of that work, which Lansdale testified involved political contacts in the Cuba exile community, is discussed at p. 142.

² Lansdale was questioned about the term "touchdown plays" which appeared in one set of SGA minutes:

"Senator BAKER: Now do you completely rule out the possibility that the touchdown play had to do with the possible assassination efforts against Fidel Castro?"

"General LANSDALE: Yes * * * I never discussed, nor conceived, nor received orders about an assassination of Castro with my dealings with either the Attorney General or the President." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 56)

siderable doubts as to its utility and I was trying to be very pragmatic." ¹ (Lansdale (7/8/75, p. 31)

When asked if he thought the President was aware of efforts to depose Castro and his government, Lansdale answered:

I am certain he was aware of efforts to dispose of the Castro regime. I am really not one to guess what he knew of assassinations, because I don't know. (*Id.*, p. 32.)

With regard to the Castro assassination attempts, Lansdale testified that Harvey "never" told him that Harvey was attempting to assassinate Castro. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 24) Lansdale stated:

I had no knowledge of such a thing. I know of no order or permission for such a thing and I was given no information at all that such a thing was going on by people who I have now learned were involved with it. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 58)

When asked if Robert Kennedy might have by-passed the SGA and Lansdale to deal directly with Agency officials on a Castro assassination, Lansdale testified:

I never knew of a direct line of communication between the President or the Attorney General and Harvey apart from me on this * * *.²

Bundy served as President Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs throughout the Kennedy Administration (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 2) and participated in the planning that led to the creation of Operation MONGOOSE. He was also a member of the SGA. (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 34, 87) Bundy worked on an intimate basis with the President and the Attorney General during the entire Kennedy Administration.

Bundy testified that it was his conviction that "no one in the Kennedy Administration, in the White House * * * ever gave any authorization, approval, or instruction of any kind for any effort to assassinate anyone by the CIA." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 54) He said that Castro's assassination was "mentioned from time to time," but "never that I can recall by the President." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 73) Bundy emphasized that the question came up "as something to talk about rather than to consider." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 73)

The CHAIRMAN. Based upon that acquaintanceship, do you believe, under any of the circumstances that occurred during that whole period, either one of them would have authorized the assassination of Fidel Castro?

Mr. BUNDY. I most emphatically do not * * *. If you have heard testimony that there was pressure to do something about Cuba, there was. There was an effort, both from the President in his style and from the Attorney General in his style to keep the government active in looking for ways to weaken the Cuban regime. There was. But if you, as I understand it, and not even those who pressed the matter most closely as having essentially been inspired by the

¹ "Senator BAKER: Is that the reason you didn't, because of the principle of deniability?"

"General LANSDALE: No, it wasn't. The subject never came up, and I had no reason to bring it up with him."

² "Senator HUDDLESTON: You never had any reason to believe that the Attorney General had dealt directly with Mr. Harvey?"

"General LANSDALE: I hadn't known about that at all, no * * *."

"Senator HUDDLESTON: * * * You have no reason to believe that he might have broached [a Castro assassination] with the Attorney General?"

"General LANSDALE: I wouldn't know about that—I certainly didn't know it."

"Senator HUDDLESTON: You had no reason to believe that there was any kind of activity going on in relation to Cuba outside of what you were proposing or what was coming before the Special Group?"

"General LANSDALE: No, I was supposed to know it all, and I had no indication that I did not know it all [except for one operation by Harvey unrelated to assassinations]. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 48)

White House can tell you that anyone ever said to them, go and kill anyone.

Let me say one other thing about these two men, and that is that there was something that they really wanted done, they did not leave people in doubt, so that on the one hand, I would say about their character, their purposes, and their nature and the way they confronted international affairs that I find it incredible that they would have ordered or authorized explicitly or implicitly an assassination of Castro. I also feel that if, contrary to everything that I know about their character, they had had such a decision and such a purpose, people would not have been in any doubt about it. (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 98-99)

Bundy said that he could not explain Helms' testimony that Helms had believed the CIA had been authorized to develop and engage in assassination activity. (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 99-100) He said that despite the extreme sense of urgency that arose during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Castro's assassination was never discussed, and it would have been "totally inconsistent" with the policies and actions of the President and the Attorney General during that crisis. (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 95, 97-98)¹

Bundy testified that he was never told that assassination efforts against Castro had been undertaken or that the CIA had used underworld figures for that purpose. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 63) He said that he had heard about "Executive Action * * * some time in the early months of 1961" (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 4), but that since it had been presented to him as an untargeted capability, he did not "discourage or dissuade" the person who briefed him.² (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 4, 7, 10)

When asked if he recalled any specific covert plans against Cuba involving poisons, Bundy stated:

I have no recollection of any specific plan. I do have a very vague, essentially refreshed recollection that I heard the word poison at some point in connection with a possibility of action in Cuba. But that is as far as I have been able to take it in my own memory. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 42)

Bundy recalled that the proposal had seemed "impractical" because it was going to kill "a large group of people in a headquarters mess, or something of that sort." (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 42-43)

Bundy stated that although Robert Kennedy did spur people to greater effort during MONGOOSE, "he never took away from the existing channel of authority its authority or responsibility." (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 47-48) He said that Robert Kennedy and Maxwell Taylor (SGA Chairman) had "a relation of real trust and confidence." It was Bundy's opinion that Robert Kennedy would not have by-passed Taylor to develop a "back-channel" with someone else to assassinate Castro. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 87)

McNamara served as Secretary of Defense throughout the Kennedy Administration. He represented the Department on the Special Group and the SGA during the MONGOOSE operations.

McNamara stated that he had never heard either the President or the Attorney General propose Castro's assassination. (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 4) He noted that: "We were hysterical about Castro at

¹ Bundy stated: " * * * the most important point I want to make * * * is that I find the notion that they separately, privately encouraged, ordered, or arranged efforts at assassination totally inconsistent with what I knew of both of them. And, as an example, I would cite—and one among very many—the role played by the Attorney General in the Missile Crisis, because it was he who, most emphatically, argued against a so-called surgical air strike or any other action that would bring death upon many, in favor of the more careful approach which was eventually adopted by the President in the form of a quarantine or a blockade." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 98)

² Executive Action is fully discussed in Section (III) (c).

the time of the Bay of Pigs and thereafter, and that there was pressure from [President Kennedy and the Attorney General] to do something about Castro. But I don't believe we contemplated assassination. We did, however, contemplate overthrow." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 93)

An exchange that occurred during McNamara's testimony captures the dilemma posed by the evidence:

The CHAIRMAN. We also have received evidence from your senior associates that they never participated in the authorization of an assassination attempt against Castro nor ever directed the CIA to undertake such attempts.

We have much testimony establishing the chain of command where covert action was concerned, and all of it has been to the effect that the Special Group or the Special Group (Augmented) had full charge of covert operations, and that in that chain of command any proposal of this character or any other proposal having to do with covert operations being directed against the Castro regime, or against Castro personally, were to be laid before the Special Group (Augmented) and were not to be undertaken except with the authority of that group and at the direction of that group.

Now, at the same time we know from the evidence that the CIA was in fact engaged during the period in a series of attempts to assassinate Castro.

Now, you see what we are faced with is this dilemma. Either the CIA was a rogue elephant rampaging out of control, over which no effective direction was being given in this matter of assassination, or there was some secret channel circumventing the whole structure of command by which the CIA and certain officials in the CIA were authorized to proceed with assassination plots and assassination attempts against Castro. Or the third and final point that I can think of is that somehow these officials of the CIA who were so engaged misunderstood or misinterpreted their scope of authority.

Now it is terribly important, if there is any way that we can find out which of these three points represented what actually happened. That is the nature, that is the quandry.

Now, is there anything that you can tell us that would assist us in finding an answer to this central question?

Mr. McNAMARA: I can only tell you what will further your uneasiness. Because I have stated before and I believe today that the CIA was a highly disciplined organization, fully under the control of senior officials of the government, so much so that I feel as a senior official of the government I must assume responsibility for the actions of the two, putting assassination aside just for the moment. But I know of no major action taken by CIA during the time I was in the government that was not properly authorized by senior officials. And when I say that I want to emphasize also that I believe with hindsight we authorized actions that were contrary to the interest of the Republic but I don't want it on the record that the CIA was uncontrolled, was operating with its own authority and we can be absolved of responsibility for what CIA did, again with exception of assassination, again which I say I never heard of.

The second point you say that you have, you know that CIA was engaged in a series of attempts of assassination. I think to use your words. I don't know that. I accept the fact that you do and that you have information I was not aware of. I find that impossible to reconcile. I just can't understand how it could have happened and I don't accept the third point, that they operated on the basis of misunderstanding, because it seems to me that the McCone position that he was opposed to it, his clear recollection and his written memo of 1967 that I was strongly opposed to it, his statement that Murrow opposed, all should eliminate any point of misunderstanding. So I frankly can't reconcile. (McNamara, 7/11/75, pp. 38-41)

McNamara concluded:

I find it almost inconceivable that the assassination attempts were carried on during the Kennedy Administration days without the senior members knowing it, and I understand the contradiction that this carries with respect to the facts. (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 90)

He emphasized that approval of an assassination by the President or his brother would have been "totally inconsistent with everything I know about the two men." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 4)

Roswell Gilpatric served as Deputy Secretary of Defense throughout the Kennedy Administration and represented the Department on the Special Group and the SGA during the MONGOOSE operation. (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 5)

Gilpatric testified that he understood the mandate of the Special Group during Mongoose was not to kill Castro, but to "so undermine, so disrupt the Cuban system under Castro that it could not be effective."¹ (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 28) Gilpatric emphasized that "it was the system we had to deal with," and that words such as "get rid of Castro" were said "in the context of the system, of the * * * government he had installed and was presiding over, but of which [Castro] was only one part." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 29)

Gilpatric said he knew of no express restriction barring assassination, but that it was understood that "there were limits on the use of power," and that those limits precluded assassination. (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 31) While he believed that it was "perfectly possible" that someone might reasonably have inferred that assassination was authorized, the limits imposed by the SGA would have required anyone receiving general instructions to make specific efforts to determine whether those instructions authorized assassination.²

Gilpatric testified that "within our charter, so to speak, the one thing that was off limits was military invasion." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 45) When asked whether the "killing of Castro by a paramilitary group [would] have been within bounds," Gilpatric responded, "I know of no restriction that would have barred it." (*Id.*) When asked if there was any concern that the raids and infiltration efforts were too limited, Gilpatric said:

No, to the contrary. The complaint that the Attorney General had, if we assume he was reflecting the President's views on it, [was that] the steps taken by the CIA up to that point, [and] their plans were too petty, were too minor, they weren't massive enough, they weren't going to be effective enough. (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 47)

¹ When Gilpatric was first interviewed by the Committee staff on July 7, 1975, he did not recall the Operation MONGOOSE designation and what it referenced. Nor did he recall that General Lansdale was Chief of Operations for the project, even though Gilpatric had previously recommended Lansdale for promotion to Brigadier General and had worked closely with him earlier on a Viet Nam operation. Gilpatric did generally recall the covert activities in Cuba. Gilpatric attributed his failed recollections to the lapse of time (approximately fifteen years) since the events.

Robert McNamara testified before the Committee on July 11, 1975, that he had spoken with Gilpatric on May 30, 1975. McNamara said: " * * * on May 30 in connection with my inquiries to determine exactly who General Lansdale was working for at the time of August 1962. I called * * * Ros Gilpatric * * * and during my conversation with Mr. Gilpatric I asked him specifically what Lansdale was working for in August '62 and Mr. Gilpatric stated that he was not working for either himself, that is Gilpatric, or me in August '62, but rather for the committee that was dealing with the MONGOOSE operation." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 78)

² Senator HUDDLESTON: " * * * It's on the basis of these words that everybody admits were used, like replace or get rid of, on the basis of these kinds of conversation alone that [Helms] was firmly convinced and that apparently went right down through the whole rank of command, firmly convinced that he had that authority to move against the life of a head of state. Now this disturbs me, and I don't know whether our councils of government operate that way in all areas or not, but if they do then it seems to me it would raise a very serious question as to whether or not the troops are getting the right orders.

Mr. GILPATRIC: " * * * I thought there were limits on the use of power, and that was one of them.

Senator HUDDLESTON: And going beyond that would require that somebody make a specific effort to make sure he understood precisely what they were talking about, would that be your interpretation?

Mr. GILPATRIC: It would." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 31)

Contrary to the opinion expressed by other witnesses, Gilpatric testified that "it was not unusual" for the President and the Attorney General to deal directly with people at various levels in the Executive Branch. (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 58) He described Robert Kennedy as the "moving spirit" of MONGOOSE (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 11) whose role was "principally to spur us on, to get going, get cracking." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 47.) Although Robert Kennedy frequently complained that the plans of the CIA and MONGOOSE were not "massive enough," and that "we should get in there and do more," Gilpatric said that the Attorney General was not urging specific proposals, and that he had desired only "to limit the Castro regime's effectiveness." (Gilpatric, 7/8/75, p. 47)

Dean Rusk served as Secretary of State throughout the Kennedy Administration and participated in a number of SGA meetings during the MONGOOSE operation. (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 7)

Rusk testified that he had never been informed of any Castro assassination plans or undertakings and had no knowledge of any such activity. (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 52) He found it "very hard to believe" that in the course of urging action against Castro, President Kennedy or Robert Kennedy would have sanctioned any measure against Castro personally.¹ He believed that while it was "possible" that someone might have thought that specific courses of action were authorized by the emphasis in SGA meetings, permission to commit an assassination could not have been reasonably inferred.

It would have been an abuse of the President and the Attorney General if somebody had thought they were getting that without confirming that this was, in fact, an official, firm policy decision. (Rusk, 7/10/75, pp. 97-98)

Rusk testified that he could not imagine the President or the Attorney General having circumvented the SGA by going directly to Helms or Harvey about assassinating Castro.²

Theodore Sorensen served as a Special Assistant to President Kennedy during the entire Kennedy Administration. He was a member of the National Security Council Executive Committee that dealt with the Missile Crisis, but was not involved with MONGOOSE.

Sorensen testified that in all his daily personal meetings with the President and at NSC meetings he attended, there was "not at any

¹ "Senator HUDDLESTON: . . . [Do] your contacts with Robert Kennedy or President Kennedy, indicate to you that they were agitated to such an extent about Cuba and MONGOOSE progress that in a conversation with someone urging them to get off their rear-end and get something done that they might convey the message that they meant anything, go to any length to do something about the Castro regime?"

MR. RUSK: I find it very hard to believe that Robert Kennedy standing alone, or particularly Robert Kennedy alleging to speak for President Kennedy, would have gone down that trail . . ." (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 96.)

² "Senator MONDALE: . . . We asked General Taylor yesterday whether he thought something of informal, subterranean, whatever kinds of communications from the highest level to Helms would have been possible without his knowledge, and he said he felt that was incredible, he didn't think it was possible.

Do you think that it would be likely that an informal order around channels, say to Helms or to Harvey—

The CHAIRMAN: Over a three-year period.

Senator MONDALE: Over a three-year period would have been possible without your being informed?

MR. RUSK: Theoretically, Senator, one would have to say it is possible.

Senator MONDALE: But based on your experience?

MR. RUSK: In terms of practicality, probability and so forth, I don't see how it could have happened.

You know those things, in these circles we were moving in could not be limited in that way. You know the echoes would come back." (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 99)

time any mention—much less approval by [the President]—of any U.S.-sponsored plan to assassinate any foreign leaders.” (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 4)

(4) THE AUGUST 10, 1962 SPECIAL GROUP (AUGMENTED) MEETING

The question of liquidating Cuban leaders was raised at a meeting of the SGA on August 10, 1962. On August 13, 1962, Lansdale directed Harvey to include in a proposed plan for Phase II of MONGOOSE, an option for the “liquidation of leaders.”

At the outset, it should be noted that the documents and testimony about the meeting indicate that the discussion of assassination on August 10 was unrelated to the assassination activity undertaken by Harvey and Rosselli, or to any other plans or efforts to assassinate Castro. The Inspector General’s Report states:

The subject (of a Castro assassination) was raised at a meeting at State on 10 August 1962, but is unrelated to any actual attempts at assassination. It did result in a MONGOOSE action memorandum by Lansdale assigning to CIA action for planning liquidation of leaders. (I.G. Report, p. 118)

This finding of the Inspector General is supported by both the chronology of the Castro assassination efforts and the testimony of Harvey. Harvey gave Rosselli the poison pills for use against Castro (and shortly thereafter was informed that the pills were inside Cuba) three months before the August 10 meeting. There was no Castro assassination activity during the remainder of 1962.

Harvey attended the August 10 meeting and recalled that the question of a Castro assassination was raised. He testified that the assassination discussion was not related to his activities with Rosselli. (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 48–50) He said that he did not regard the SGA discussion as authorization for his Rosselli operation because “the authority, as I understood it, for this particular operation went back long before the formation of the SGA.” (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 49)

A. THE CONTEMPORANEOUS DOCUMENTS

(1) *Lansdale’s August 13, 1962 Memorandum*

Lansdale’s August 13 memorandum was sent to Harvey and to the other members of Lansdale’s interagency working group.¹ The Memorandum stated:

In compliance with the desires and guidance expressed in the August 10 policy meeting on Operation MONGOOSE, we will produce an outline of an alternate Course B for submission.

I believe the paper need contain only a statement of objectives and a list of implementing activities. The list of activities will be under the heading of: Intelligence, Political, Economic, Psychological, Paramilitary, and Military.

¹ Lansdale sent copies of his memorandum to Robert Hurwitch (State Department), General Benjamin Harris (Defense Department) and Donald Wilson (United States Information Agency).

When General Harris testified, he identified a document drafted by the MONGOOSE Working Group in the Defense Department shortly before the August 10 meeting. The document listed a number of steps that could be taken in the event of an intensified MONGOOSE program that might involve United States military intervention. One such step was “assassinate Castro and his handful of top men.” General Harris stated that this was “not out of the ordinary in terms of contingency planning . . . it’s one of the things you look at.” (Harris, 8/18/75, p. 37) There was no evidence that this document was distributed outside the Defense Department’s MONGOOSE Working Group.

Lansdale's memorandum then assigned to Harvey preparation of papers on the following subjects:

Mr. HARVEY. Intelligence, Political, [words deleted], Economic, (sabotage, limited deception), and Paramilitary." (*Id.*)

According to a memorandum from Harvey to Helms on the following day, the words deleted from the quoted passage were "including liquidation of leaders." (Memo, Harvey to Helms, 8/14/62)

(2) *Harvey's August 14, 1962 Memorandum*

After receiving Lansdale's August 13 memorandum, Harvey wrote a memorandum to Helms. He attached a copy of the Lansdale memorandum, and noted that he had excised the words "including liquidation of leaders." Harvey's memorandum explained that:

The question of assassination, particularly of Fidel Castro, was brought up by Secretary McNamara at the meeting of the Special Group (Augmented) in Secretary Rusk's office on 10 August. It was the obvious consensus at that meeting, in answer to a comment by Mr. Ed Murrow, that this is not a subject which has been made a matter of official record. I took careful notes on the comments at this meeting on this point, and the Special Group (Augmented) is not expecting any written comments or study on this point." (*Id.*)

Harvey's memorandum further stated that he had called Lansdale's office and pointed out "the inadmissability and stupidity of putting this type of comment in writing in such a document." (*Id.*) He also told Lansdale's office that the CIA "would write no document pertaining to this and would participate in no open meeting discussing it." (*Id.*)

(3) *The Minutes of the August 10, 1962 Meeting*

The minutes of the August 10 meeting contain no reference to assassination. (Memo for Record, Special Group Augmented Meeting, August 10, 1962, hereafter "August 10 Minutes") Thomas Parrott, who authored the August 10 Minutes, testified that he did not recall a discussion of assassination at that meeting, but that the fact that the minutes reflect no such discussion does not necessarily indicate that the matter had not come up. (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 34) Parrott pointed out that his minutes "were not intended to be a verbatim transcript of everything that was said," since their purpose was "to interpret what the decisions were and to record those and to use them as a useful action document." [Parrott, 7/10/75, pp. 34-35.] Parrott testified: "we had 15 or 16 people [at the August 10, 1962 meeting] * * * all of them well informed, all of them highly articulate. This meeting, as I recall, went on for several hours. * * * Now I'm sure that particularly in a group like this that there were a great many proposals made that were just shot down immediately." (Parrott, 7/10/75, pp. 34-35)

Parrott testified that he did not record proposals that were quickly rejected. (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 35) He said that, although he had no recollection of a discussion of Castro's assassination at the meeting, he would infer from the related documents [the Lansdale and Harvey Memoranda of August 13 and 14, respectively] that the subject was

raised but "it never got off the ground * * *. Therefore, I did not record it." (Parrott, 7/10/75, p. 35)

(4) *The August 10 Meeting*

The purpose of the August 10 Meeting was to decide on a course of action to succeed the intelligence collection phase of MONGOOSE, scheduled to conclude in August. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 34) Because it was a policy meeting, a larger number of officials than usual attended. The Meeting was chaired by Secretary of State Rusk and those attending included the principals of the other agencies taking part in MONGOOSE, i.e., Secretary of Defense McNamara, CIA Director McCone, and USIA Director Murrow.

General Lansdale submitted a MONGOOSE proposal for a "stepped-up Course B" that would involve operations to "exert all possible diplomatic, economic, psychological, and other overt pressures to overthrow the Castro-Communist regime, without overt employment of U.S. military." (Lansdale Memo for Special Group Augmented, 8/8/62)

The SGA decided against the "stepped-up Course B." In discussing Lansdale's proposal, Rusk "emphasized the desirability of attempting to create a split between Castro and old-line Communists." McNamara questioned whether the practice of building up agents in Cuba would not lead to actions that "would hurt the U.S. in the eyes of world opinion."¹ The minutes state that McNamara's concern "led to the suggestion by General Taylor that we should consider changing the overall objective [of MONGOOSE] from one of overthrowing the Castro regime" to one of causing its failure. (SGA Minutes, 8/10/62, p. 2)

Instead of Lansdale's "stepped-up Course B," the SGA chose a plan advanced by McCone which assumed Castro's continuance in power and had the more limited objective of splitting off Castro from "old-line Communists."² (SGA Minutes, 8/10/62, p. 2) The decision and "action" were described as follows:

The principal members of the Special Group felt, after some discussion, that the CIA variant should be developed further for consideration at next Thursday's meeting of the Special Group. McCone was asked to stress economic sabotage, and to emphasize measures to foment a Castro-oldline Communist split.

Action to be taken: CIA to prepare a new version of its variant plan, in accordance with the above-summarized discussion. This should be ready by Wednesday, August 15. (SGA Minutes Memo, 8/10/62, pp. 2-3)

The discussion which follows treats testimony bearing on whether Lansdale's request to Harvey for an assassination plan reflected the wishes of the SGA or was contemplated by the SGA's decision to proceed with a plan of "reduced effort" that posited Castro's continuance in power.

¹ That remark by McNamara seems to be inconsistent with his raising the question of assassination in any sense of advocacy at the same meeting.

² The August 10 Minutes show that McCone pointed out that the stepped-up Course B "will risk inviting an uprising, which might result in a Hungary-type blood bath if 'un-supported.'" McCone "emphasized that the stepped-up plan should not be undertaken unless the U.S. is prepared to accept attributability for the necessary actions, including the eventual use of military force." The August 10 Minutes further stated that, in McCone's view, the CIA variant "would avoid all of these dangers because it would not invite an uprising." (SGA Minutes, 8/10/62, p. 2)

B. THE TESTIMONY

Harvey, McCone, and Goodwin recalled that the question of assassinating Castro was raised at the August 10 meeting.¹ Their testimony is discussed first with regard to the meeting itself, and second, with regard to the action that followed.

*(1) Testimony About the August 10 Meeting**(a) McCone*

McCone testified that "liquidation" or removal of Castro and other Cuban leaders arose at the August 10 meeting in the context of "exploring the alternatives that were available" for the next phase of MONGOOSE. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 34) He did not recall who made this suggestion, but remembered that he and Edward Murrow took "strong exception" to it. A memorandum written by McCone in 1967 states:²

I took immediate exception to this suggestion, stating that the subject was completely out of bounds as far as the USG [U.S. Government] and CIA were concerned and the idea should not be discussed nor should it appear in any papers, as the USG could not consider such actions on moral or ethical grounds.

McCone testified that there was no decision at the meeting not to include assassination in the program, and that "the subject was just dropped" after his objection. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 37) McCone's 1967 memorandum stated that: "At no time did the suggestion receive serious consideration by the Special Group (Augmented) nor by any individual responsible for policy."

(b) Harvey

It was Harvey's recollection that the question of assassination was raised by Secretary McNamara as one of "shouldn't we consider the elimination or assassination" of Castro. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 30) Harvey testified:

I think the consensus of the Group was to sweep that particular proposal or suggestion or question or consideration off the record and under the rug as rapidly as possible. There was no extensive discussion of it, no discussion, no back and forth as the whys and wherefores and possibilities and so on. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 30)

(c) Goodwin

Goodwin testified that he had a recollection of "limited certainty" that the subject of a Castro assassination was raised at the August 10

¹ Other participants (Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, and Gilpatric) did not recall the August 10 discussion.

² On April 14, 1967, after McCone left the CIA, he dictated a memorandum stating his recollection of the August 10, 1962 meeting. The memorandum was prompted by a telephone call from the newspaper columnist, Jack Anderson, who at that time was preparing a column on Castro assassination attempts, implicating President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. After talking with Anderson on the telephone at Robert Kennedy's request, McCone dictated the April 14, 1967 memorandum, which stated, in part, several MONGOOSE meetings on August 8, 9, or 10, 1962, "I recall a suggestion being made to liquidate top people in the Castro regime, including Castro."

meeting,¹ but he was unable to say "with any certainty" who raised the subject. (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 8)²

(d) *McNamara*

McNamara testified that although he did not recall assassination being discussed at the SGA meeting, he did remember having expressed opposition to any assassination attempt or plan when he spoke with McCone several days later. (McNamara, 7/11/75, pp. 7, 8)

(2) *Testimony about Events After the August 10, 1962 meeting*

(a) *McCone*

McCone testified that he called McNamara after receiving Lansdale's August 13 Memorandum and:

"* * * insisted that that Memorandum be withdrawn because no decision was made on this subject, and since no decision was made, then Lansdale was quite out of order in tasking the Central Intelligence Agency to consider the matter."³

McCone said that McNamara agreed that Lansdale's Memorandum should be withdrawn⁴ for the same reason. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 39)

(b) *Harvey*

Harvey's demand that the words "liquidation of leaders" be excised from Lansdale's memorandum and his further statement that "the Special Group (Augmented) is not expecting any written comments or study on this point," raise an important question. Did Harvey mean that the SGA was not considering assassination or merely that the subject should not be put in writing? When Harvey was asked "was it

¹ In a staff interview prior to his testimony, Goodwin recalled the date of the meeting at which a Castro assassination was raised as falling in early 1961, after the Bay of Pigs. (Memorandum of Staff Interview with Goodwin, 5/27/75, p. 2) After reviewing the Minutes of the August 10, 1962 meeting and the Lansdale and Harvey memoranda of August 13 and 14, respectively, Goodwin testified that he had "misplaced the date of the meeting in my own memory." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 7.) In placing the incident on August 10, 1962, Goodwin stated "Now, of course, you know, it may not be. That's the best recollection I now have. It's a little better than the earlier one, but it's not certain." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 8)

² In a magazine article in June 1975, Goodwin was quoted as stating that at one of the meetings of a White House task force on Cuba it was McNamara who said that "Castro's assassination was the only productive way of dealing with Cuba." (Branch and Crlie, "The Kennedy Vendetta," *Harpers*, July, 1975, p. 61). In his testimony on July 18, 1975, Goodwin said: "that's not an exact quote" in the article, and explained: "I didn't tell [the author of the magazine article] that it was definitely McNamara, that very possibly it was McNamara. He asked me about McNamara's role, and I said it very well could have been McNamara." (Goodwin, 7/18/75, p. 33)

Goodwin told the Committee: "It's not a light matter to perhaps destroy a man's career on the basis of a fifteen year old memory of a single sentence that he might have said at a meeting without substantial certainty in your own mind, and I do not have that" (Goodwin, 7/18/75, pp. 34-35). It is difficult to reconcile this testimony with Goodwin's testimony that he told the author of the article that McNamara might very well have made the statement about assassination at the August meeting.

³ McCone's 1967 Memorandum stated: "Immediately after the meeting, I called on Secretary McNamara personally and reemphasized my position, in which he heartily agreed. I did this because Operation MONGOOSE—an interdepartmental affair—was under the operational control of [the Defense Department] * * *"

⁴ McNamara confirmed this testimony: "I agreed with Mr. McCone that no such planning should be undertaken." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 8.) He added: "I have no knowledge or information about any other plans or preparations for a Castro assassination." (McNamara, 7/11/75, p. 7)

understood in an unwritten way that [assassination] was to proceed," he replied:

Not to my knowledge, no * * *. If there was any unwritten understanding on the part of the members of the Special Group concerning this, other than what was said at the meeting, I do not know of it * * *. (Harvey, 7/11/75, pp. 30-31)

Harvey said that shortly after the meeting, McCone informed him that he had told McNamara that assassination should not be discussed. McCone also told McNamara that involvement in such matters might result in his own excommunication. (Harvey, 7/11/75, p. 25)

(c) *Elder*

Walter Elder, McCone's Executive Assistant, was present when McCone telephoned McNamara after the August 10 meeting. Elder testified that McCone told McNamara "the subject you just brought up, I think it is highly improper. I do not think it should be discussed. It is not an action that should ever be condoned. It is not proper for us to discuss, and I intend to have it expunged from the record." (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 23)

Elder testified that this was the essence of the conversation but that he distinctly remembered "several exact phrases, like 'would not be condoned' and 'improper'." (Elder, 8/13/75, pp. 23, 24) ¹

McCone spoke with Harvey in Elder's presence after receiving Lansdale's August 13 memorandum. According to Elder, "McCone made his views quite clear in the same language and tone * * * that he used with Mr. McNamara." (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 25) Elder testified that Harvey did not then tell McCone that Harvey was engaged in a Castro assassination effort. (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 25)

Elder also described a meeting held in his office with Helms shortly after the McCone/Harvey/Elder meeting. Elder stated:

I told Mr. Helms that Mr. McCone had expressed his feeling to Mr. McNamara and Mr. Harvey that assassination could not be condoned and would not be approved. Furthermore, I conveyed Mr. McCone's statement that it would be unthinkable to record in writing any consideration of assassination because it left the impression that the subject had received serious consideration by governmental policymakers, which it had not. Mr. Helms responded, "I understand." The point is that I made Mr. Helms aware of the strength of Mr. McCone's opposition to assassination. I know that Mr. Helms could not have been under any misapprehension about Mr. McCone's feelings after this conversation. (Elder Affidavit, 8/26/75, p. 2)

Helms, after reading Elder's affidavit, told the Committee that he had no recollection of the meeting. (Helms, 9/16/75, p. 16)

(d) *Lansdale*

Lansdale recalled that the subject of Castro's assassination had surfaced at the August 10 meeting. He testified that the "consensus was * * * hell no on this and there was a very violent reaction." (Lansdale,

¹ Elder said he heard the entire telephone conversation via a speaker phone. He said that McNamara "just more or less accepted what Mr. McCone said without comment or rejoinder." (Elder, 8/13/75, p. 24)

7/8/75, p. 20) Lansdale was questioned as to why he subsequently asked Harvey for a Castro assassination plan:

Senator BAKER. Why did you, three days later if they all said, hell no, [go] ahead with it?

General LANSDALE. * * * the meeting at which they said that was still on a development of my original task, which was a revolt and an overthrow of a regime. At the same time, we were getting intelligence accumulating very quickly of something very different taking place in Cuba than we had expected, which was the Soviet technicians starting to come in and the possibilities of Soviet missiles being placed there * * * At that time, I thought it would be a possibility someplace down the road in which there would be some possible need to take action such as that [assassination]¹ (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 21)

Lansdale stated that he had one brief conversation with Harvey after the August 13 memorandum in which Harvey stated "he would look into it * * * see about developing some plans." Lansdale said that was the last he ever heard of the matter. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 124) Lansdale stated that as the Cuban Missile Crisis developed, MON-GOOSE "was being rapidly shifted out of consideration" and thus "I wasn't pressing for answers * * * it was very obvious that another situation was developing that would be handled quite differently in Cuba." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 124)

Lansdale testified that he was "very certain" that he never discussed a Castro assassination plan or proposal with Robert Kennedy or with President Kennedy. He said that he had asked Harvey for a plan without having discussed the matter with anyone:

Senator BAKER: * * * did you originate this idea of laying on the CIA a requirement to report on the feasibility of the assassination of Castro or did someone else suggest that?

General LANSDALE: I did, as far as I recall.

Senator BAKER: Who did you discuss it with before you laid on that requirement?

General LANSDALE: I don't believe I discussed it with anyone.

Senator BAKER: Only with Harvey?

General LANSDALE: Only with Harvey.

Senator BAKER: Did you ever discuss it with Helms?

General LANSDALE: I might have, and I don't believe that I did. I think it was just with Harvey.

Senator BAKER: Did you ever discuss it with Robert Kennedy?

General LANSDALE: No, not that I recall.

Senator BAKER: With the President?

General LANSDALE: No. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, pp. 19-20)

(3) *Testimony of Reporters About Lansdale's Comments on the August 10 Meeting*

During the Committee's investigation, reports concerning the August 10 meeting and Lansdale's request for a Castro assassination plan appeared in the press. One report was based on statements made by Lansdale to David Martin of the Associated Press and another on Lansdale's statements to Jeremiah O'Leary of the *Washington Star-News*. Because there was conflict between Lansdale's testimony

¹ "Q. * * * Why, if it is true that assassination idea was turned down on August 10, did you send out your memo on August 13?

General LANSDALE. * * * I don't recall that thoroughly, I don't remember the reasons why I would.

Q. Is your testimony that the August 10 meeting turned down assassinations as a subject to look into, and that you nevertheless asked Mr. Harvey to look into it?

General LANSDALE. I guess it is, yes. The way you put it to me now has me baffled about why I did it. I don't know." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, pp. 123-124)

to the Committee and what he was reported to have told Martin and O'Leary, the Committee invited both reporters to testify. Martin testified under subpoena. O'Leary appeared voluntarily but stated that the policy of his newspaper against disclosing news sources precluded him from elaborating on the contents of a prepared statement, which he read under oath. O'Leary stated that his news report "represents accurately my understanding of the relevant information I obtained from news sources." (O'Leary, 9/26/75, p. 5)

(a) *The Martin Report*

The lead paragraph of Martin's report stated:

Retired Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale said Friday that acting on orders from President John F. Kennedy delivered through an intermediary, he developed plans for removing Cuban Premier Fidel Castro by any means including assassination.

Martin testified that this paragraph was an accurate reflection of his conclusion based on the totality of his interview with Lansdale on May 30, 1975. (Martin, 7/24/75, pp. 19-20) Lansdale testified that, after reading Martin's story, he told the reporter that "your first sentence is not only completely untrue, but there is not a single thing in your story that says it is true." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 65)

In view of Martin's testimony that the report's lead paragraph was a conclusion based on his total interview with Lansdale, it should be noted that the remainder of Martin's story does not state that Lansdale was ordered by President Kennedy or the Attorney General to develop plans for Castro's assassination. The report quotes Lansdale as stating "I was working for the highest authority in the land * * * the President," and then states that Lansdale said he did not deal directly with the President, but "worked through" an intermediary who was more intimate with the President than Bundy.¹ The Committee notes that the phrases "working for" and "working through" do not carry the same meaning as the lead paragraph's conclusion that Lansdale was "acting on orders" to develop a Castro assassination plan. Subsequent paragraphs in the Martin report indicate that Lansdale told the reporter that the decision to undertake assassination planning was his own; Lansdale so testified before the Committee. According to the Martin article, Lansdale said that assassination was "one of the means he considered," that he believed assassination would not have been "incompatible" with his assignment, and that he " * * * just wanted to see if the U.S. had any such capabilities." Martin said he did not ask Lansdale specifically if Lansdale had acted on orders regarding an assassination plan, nor did Lansdale volunteer that information. Rather, Martin asked Lansdale "Who were you working for?"²

¹ Lansdale refused to provide Martin the intermediary's name for the record. The Committee did not ask Martin about Lansdale's off-the-record statements out of respect for the confidentiality of news sources (Martin, 7/24/75, p. 18)

² Martin testified that his interview with Lansdale involved two questions: (1) "What were you [Lansdale] doing in August 1962?" (Martin, 7/24/75, p. 16), and (2) "Who were you working for?" (Martin 7/24/75, p. 17) Martin stated that in discussing Lansdale's activities in August 1962, Lansdale stated, "I just wanted to see if the U.S. had any such capabilities" and that this included "assassination" as well as other means of disposing of Castro. As to the second question "Who were you working for?" Lansdale replied "on that project I was working for the highest authority in the land." (Martin, 7/24/75, p. 18)

In a subsequent conversation on June 4, 1975, Martin said he asked Lansdale specifically, "Were you ever ordered by President Kennedy or any other Kennedy to draw up plans to assassinate Castro?" (Martin, 7/24/75, p. 21) Martin testified that Lansdale replied "no" and that his orders were "very broad." (Martin, 7/24/75, p. 21) Martin further testified that in the June 4 conversation he asked Lansdale whether "any assassination planning you did was done on your own initiative," and that Lansdale replied "yes." (Martin 7/24/75, p. 21) Martin stated his belief that Lansdale's statements on June 4 were at variance with his prior statements on May 30. (Martin 7/24/75, p. 21) It is, of course, possible that since Martin posed different questions in the two conversations, he and Lansdale may have misunderstood each other.

(b) *The O'Leary Report*

O'Leary's report began:

Retired Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale has named Robert F. Kennedy as the administration official who ordered him in 1962 to launch a CIA project to work out all feasible plans for "getting rid of" Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

Lansdale, in an interview with the Washington Star, never used the word "assassination" and said it was not used by Kennedy, then the attorney general.

But he said there could be no doubt that "that project for disposing of Castro envisioned the whole spectrum of plans from overthrowing the Cuban leader to assassinating him."

O'Leary's report contained the statement that "Lansdale said he was contacted by Robert Kennedy in mid-summer of 1962 * * *." O'Leary told the Committee that this reference modified the reference in the lead paragraph of his report. (O'Leary, 9/26/75, p. 13)

Lansdale testified that he had submitted a statement to the *Washington Star News* stating that O'Leary's report was "a distortion of my remarks." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 61) Lansdale said he told the newspaper that: "perhaps someplace in the planning there is something about what to do with a leader who would threaten the lives of millions of Americans [with Soviet Missiles] * * * but I can say I never did receive any order from President Kennedy or from Robert Kennedy about taking action against Castro personally." (Lansdale, 7/18/75, pp. 61-62)

Lansdale testified that he told O'Leary that he did take orders from Robert Kennedy, but made clear that "Kennedy's orders to him were on a very wide-ranging type of thing." (Lansdale, 7/8/75, p. 62)

After the story appeared, the * * * *Washington Star* asked me what wide-ranging things were you talking about?

I said there were economic matters and military matters and military things and they were very wide-ranging things. I said perhaps all O'Leary was thinking of was assassination. I was thinking of far wider than that. (Lansdale, 7/8/75, pp. 62-63)

The O'Leary report states:

Lansdale said he is certain Robert Kennedy's instructions to him did not include the word "assassination." He said the attorney general, as best he could recall, spoke in more general terms of exploring all feasible means and practicalities of doing something "to get rid of" Castro.

(iii) THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE AM/LASH PLOT (1962-1965)
 WAS KNOWN ABOUT OR AUTHORIZED BY ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS
 OUTSIDE THE CIA

This section examines evidence relating to whether officials in the Kennedy or Johnson Administrations were aware of or authorized the CIA's use of AM/LASH as a potential assassin. The question is examined in light of the policies of those Administrations toward Cuba as well as the evidence bearing more directly on the authorization issues.

The evidence falls into a pattern similar to that described in the discussion of post-Bay of Pigs activity in the Kennedy Administration. Administration officials testified that they had never been informed about the plot and that they never intended to authorize assassination. Richard Helms, on the other hand, testified that he had believed that assassination was permissible in view of the continuing pressure to overthrow the Castro regime exerted by the respective Administrations and the failure of either Administration to place limits on the means that could be used to achieve that end.

(1) KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARD CUBA IN 1963

a. Organizational Changes

The MONGOOSE Operation was disbanded following the Cuban Missile Crisis, and an interagency "Cuban Coordinating Committee" was established within the State Department with responsibility for developing covert action proposals. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 148) The SGA was abolished, and the Special Group, chaired by McGeorge Bundy, reassumed responsibility for reviewing and approving covert actions in Cuba. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 148)

United States policy toward Cuba in 1963 was also formulated in the National Security Council's Standing Group, the successor to the Executive Committee which had been established for the Missile Crisis. Members of the Standing Group included Robert Kennedy, Robert McNamara, John McCone, McGeorge Bundy and Theodore Sorensen.

Four aspects of the Kennedy Administration's 1963 Cuba policy are discussed below: (1) the Standing Group's discussion of possible developments in the event of Castro's death; (2) the Standing Group's discussion of policy options; (3) the covert action program approved by the Special Group; and (4) the diplomatic effort to explore the possibility of reestablishing relations with Castro. The first three took place in the spring or early summer of 1963; the fourth—the effort to communicate with Castro—occurred at the same time the CIA offered AM/LASH the poison pen device for Castro's assassination.

b. Discussion of the Contingency of Castro's Death

In the spring of 1963, Bundy submitted to the Standing Group a memorandum entitled "Cuba Alternatives" which discussed "possible new directions" for American policy toward Cuba. (Bundy Memorandum, 4/21/63) The memorandum distinguished between events which might occur independently of actions taken by the United

States, and those which the United States might "initiate." Listed under the first category was the possibility of Castro's death. In May 1963, the Group discussed this contingency and found that the possibilities for developments favorable to the United States if Castro should die were "singularly unpromising." (Summary Record of Standing Group Meeting, 5/28/63)

When Bundy's memorandum was first discussed by the Group in April, Robert Kennedy proposed a study of the "measures we would take following contingencies such as the death of Castro or the shooting down of a U-2." (Summary Record of Standing Group Meeting, 4/23/63) Bundy's follow-up memorandum, an agenda for a future Standing Group discussion of Cuban policy, listed contingency planning for Castro's death under a category comprising events not initiated by the United States, *e.g.*, "occurrence of revolt or repression in the manner of Hungary," "attributable interference by Castro in other countries," and "the reintroduction of offensive weapons." (Bundy Memorandum, 4/29/63)

After the Standing Group's meeting on April 23, 1963, the CIA's Office of National Estimates was assigned the task of assessing possible developments if Castro should die. (Memorandum for Members of the Standing Group, 5/2/63) The resulting paper analyzed the forces likely to come into play in Cuba after Castro's death, including the roles of his top aides, Raul Castro and Che Guevara, and possible Soviet reactions. (Draft Memorandum by Office of National Estimates titled "Developments in Cuba and Possible U.S. Actions in the Event of Castro's Death," pp. 2-5) The paper concluded that "the odds are that upon Castro's death, his brother Raul or some other figure in the regime would, with Soviet backing and help, take over control"¹ The paper warned: "If Castro were to die by other than natural causes the U.S. would be widely charged with complicity, even though it is widely known that Castro has many enemies."

The paper also identified several courses of action open to the United States in the event of Castro's death, ranging from no United States initiatives, action to support a government in exile, quarantine and blockade, and outright invasion.

On May 28, 1963, the Standing Group discussed this paper. The Group decided that "all of the courses of action were singularly unpromising". (Summary Record of NSC Standing Group Meeting No. 7/63, May 28, 1963)

Bundy testified that the Standing Group "certainly posed the question" in the Spring of 1963 of what would happen if Castro died or were killed. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 130) However, he said that he had no recollection of Castro's assassination being considered by the Standing Group when that contingency was discussed. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 14)²

Bundy said that one reason for having requested the estimate was to make a record establishing that the United States should not be

¹ The paper also saw little chance that a government favorably disposed toward the United States would be able to come to power without extensive United States military support: "Anti-Moscow Cuban nationalists would require extensive U.S. help in order to win, and probably U.S. military intervention."

² Bundy did recall that over the period 1961 to 1963 "the subject of a Castro assassination was mentioned from time to time by different individuals," but he said that he was not aware of "much discussion in the Spring of 1963 on that subject." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 140)

"fussing" with assassination, and that assassination was not a sound policy. (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 142)

Bundy said that it was not unusual to assess the implications of a foreign leader's death, and named Stalin and De Gaulle as examples. In the case of Castro, Bundy said he felt it was only prudent to attempt to assess a post-Castro Cuba since Castro was such a "dominant figure." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 145)

c. The Standing Group's Discussion of United States Policy Toward Cuba

The Standing Group's documents indicate it continued to assume the desirability of harassing Cuba, but recognized that there were few practical measures the United States could take to achieve Castro's overthrow.

In his April 21 memorandum on "Cuban Alternatives" Bundy identified three possible alternatives: (1) forcing "a non-Communist solution in Cuba by all necessary means," (2) insisting on "major but limited ends," or (3) moving "in the direction of a gradual development of some form of accommodation with Castro." (Bundy Memorandum, 4/21/63, p. 3) These alternatives were discussed at the Standing Group meetings on April 23 and May 28, 1963.

Sorensen participated in these meetings. He testified that the "widest possible range of alternatives" was discussed, but that "assassination was not even on the list." (Sorensen, 7/21/75, p. 4) He said that options such as forcing "a non-Communist solution in Cuba by all necessary means"

*** could not have included or implied assassination. Instead, it expressly referred to the development of pressures and gradual escalation of the confrontation in Cuba to produce an overthrow of the regime, including a willingness to use military force to invade Cuba. Such a course was obviously not adopted by the President, and in any event expressed an approach far different from assassination. (Sorensen affidavit, 7/25/75)¹

The record of the first Standing Group discussion of Bundy's memorandum shows that a number of alternatives (none of which involved assassination) were considered but no conclusions were reached.

The Standing Group again met on May 28, 1963. McCone argued for steps to "increase economic hardship" in Cuba, supplemented by sabotage to "create a situation in Cuba in which it would be possible to subvert military leaders to the point of their acting to overthrow Castro." (Summary Record of NSC Standing Group Meeting, 5/28/63) McNamara said that sabotage would not be "conclusive" and suggested that "economic pressures which would upset Castro" be studied. Robert Kennedy said "the U.S. must do something against Castro, even though we do not believe our actions would bring him down." (*id.*) Bundy summarized by stating that the task was "to decide now what actions we would take against Castro, acknowl-

¹ The Bundy memorandum also used the phrase "all necessary measures" to describe the steps the American Government was willing to take to "prevent" a direct military threat to the United States or to the Western Hemisphere from Cuba. Sorensen explained the meaning of this phrase in the context of the April 23 discussion of Kennedy Administration policy. "[this phrase] could not by any stretch of semantics or logic have included assassination or any other initiative. It reflected the purely defensive posture implemented six months earlier when long-range missiles and other offensive weapons were placed in Cuba." (Sorensen affidavit, 7/25/75)

edging that the measures practical for us to take will not result in his overthrow." (*id.*)

d. The Special Group's Authorization of a Sabotage Program Against Cuba

During the first six months of 1963, little, if any, sabotage activity against Cuba was undertaken.¹ However, on June 19, 1963, following the Standing Group's discussion of Cuba policy in the spring, President Kennedy approved a sabotage program.² (Memorandum for the Special Group, 6/19/63) In contrast to the MONGOCSE program, which sought to build toward an eventual internal revolt, the 1963 covert action program had a more limited objective, *i.e.*, "to nourish a spirit of resistance and disaffection which could lead to significant defections and other byproducts of unrest." (*id.*)

After initial approval, specific intelligence and sabotage operations were submitted to the Special Group for prior authorization. On October 3, 1963, the Special Group approved nine operations in Cuba, several of which involved sabotage. On October 24, 1963, thirteen major sabotage operations, including the sabotage of an electric power plant, an oil refinery, and a sugar mill, were approved for the period from November 1963 through January 1964. (Memorandum, 7/11/75, CIA Review Staff to Select Committee, on "Approved CIA Covert Operations into Cuba")

e. The Diplomatic Effort to Explore an Accommodation with Castro

As early as January 4, 1963, Bundy proposed to President Kennedy that the possibility of communicating with Castro be explored. (Memorandum, Bundy to the President, 1/4/63) Bundy's memorandum on "Cuba Alternatives" of April 23, 1963, also listed the "gradual development of some form of accommodation with Castro" among policy alternatives. (Bundy memorandum, 4/21/63) At a meeting on June 3, 1963, the Special Group agreed it would be a "useful endeavor" to explore "various possibilities of establishing channels of communication to Castro." (Memorandum of Special Group meeting, 6/6/63)

In the fall of 1963, William Atwood was a Special Advisor to the United States Delegation to the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador. (Atwood, 7/10/75, p. 3) Atwood testified that from September until November 1963, he held a series of talks with the Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations to discuss opening negotiations on an accommodation between Castro and the United States.

Atwood said that at the outset he informed Robert Kennedy of these talks and was told that the effort "was worth pursuing." (Atwood, 7/10/75, pp. 5-9) Atwood said he regularly reported on the talks to the White House and to Adlai Stevenson, his superior at the United Nations. (Atwood, 7/10/75, pp. 6-7) Atwood stated that he was told

¹ At an April 3, 1963 meeting on Cuba, Bundy stated that no sabotage operations were then underway because the Special Group "had decided . . . that such activity is not worth the effort expended on it." (Memorandum of Meeting on Cuba, 4/3/63)

² The sabotage program was directed at "four major segments of the Cuban economy," (1) electric power; (2) petroleum refineries and storage facilities; (3) railroad and highway transportation and (4) production and manufacturing. (Memorandum for the Special Group, June 19, 1963, p. 1.) Operations under this program were to be conducted by CIA-controlled Cuban agents from a United States island off Florida and were to complement a similar effort designed to "develop internal resistance elements which could carry out sabotage." (*id.*)

by Bundy that President Kennedy was in favor of "pushing towards an opening toward Cuba" to take Castro "out of the Soviet fold and perhaps wiping out the Bay of Pigs and maybe getting back to normal." (Atwood, 7/10/75, pp. 5-9)

Atwood said he believed that the only people who knew about his contacts with the Cubans were the President, Ambassador Averell Harriman, Ambassador Stevenson, Attorney General Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy, Bundy's assistant, and journalist Lisa Howard.¹ Atwood also testified that he arranged for a French journalist, Jean Daniel, to visit the White House prior to Daniel's scheduled trip to see Castro. (Atwood, 7/10/75, p. 19) (According to an article by Daniel in December 1963, Daniel met with President Kennedy on October 24, 1963. They discussed the prospects for reestablishing United States-Cuba relations and President Kennedy asked Daniel to report to him after seeing Castro.)²

On November 18, 1963, Atwood spoke by telephone with a member of Castro's staff in Cuba. (Atwood, 7/10/75, p. 8) Pursuant to White House instructions, Atwood informed Castro's staff member that the United States favored preliminary negotiations at the United Nations (rather than in Cuba as proposed by the Cubans), and that the United States desired to work out an agenda for these talks. (Atwood, 7/10/75, pp. 8-9) Atwood reported this conversation to Bundy who told him that after the Cuban agenda was received, President Kennedy wanted to see Atwood to "decide what to say and whether to go or what we should do next." (*id.*, p. 9) Jean Daniel, the French journalist, met with Castro four days later on November 22, 1963, the same day AM/LASH was given the poison pen. On that same day, President Kennedy was assassinated.³ With the change of Administrations, Atwood's talks with the Cubans became less frequent, and eventually ceased early in 1964. (Atwood, 7/10/75, p. 10)

(2) TESTIMONY ON THE QUESTION OF AUTHORIZATION FOR THE AM/LASH POISON PEN DEVICE

a. The October Meeting with AM/LASH and the Use of Robert Kennedy's Name Without Obtaining His Approval

Desmond Fitzgerald met AM/LASH in October 1963, and represented to AM/LASH that he was the personal representative of Robert Kennedy. He gave AM/LASH assurances of full support should AM/LASH succeed in overthrowing Castro.

The 1967 Inspector General's Report states that, according to Fitzgerald, Helms and Fitzgerald discussed the planned meeting with AM/LASH, and Helms decided "it was not necessary to seek approval from Robert Kennedy for Fitzgerald to speak in his name." (I.G. Report, pp. 88-89) When he testified before the Committee, Helms said he did not recall such a discussion with Fitzgerald. He stated

¹ Howard had initially placed Atwood in contact with the Cuban Ambassador after reporting to Atwood that during a trip to Cuba, she had learned Castro was anxious to establish communications with the United States. Thereafter Howard served as an intermediary in arranging Atwood's meetings with the Cubans. (Atwood, 7/10/75 pp. 4, 18.)

² Daniel, "Unofficial Envoy: A Historic Report from Two Capitals," (New Republic, December 14, 1963).

³ Daniel was with Castro when Castro received the report of President Kennedy's assassination. Daniel, "When Castro Heard the News," (New Republic, December 7, 1963)

however, that he believed he had pre-existing authority to deal with AM/LASH regarding "a change in government" (as opposed to assassination) and that authority would have obviated the need to obtain Robert Kennedy's approval.¹ Helms testified: "I felt so sure that if I went to see Mr. Kennedy that he would have said yes, that I don't think there was any need to." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 132)

Helms said he had considered AM/LASH to be a political action agent, not a potential assassin, and that Fitzgerald's meeting with AM/LASH and Helms' decision not to contact Robert Kennedy should be viewed in that light.

* * * given this Cuban of his standing and all the history * * * of trying to find someone inside Cuba who might head a government and have a group to replace Castro * * * this was so central to the whole theme of everything we had been trying to do, that I [found] it totally unnecessary to ask Robert Kennedy at that point [whether] we should go ahead with this. This is obviously what he had been pushing, what everybody had been pushing for us to try to do * * * let's get on with doing it." (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 117-118)²

b. The Delivery of the Poison Pen on November 22, 1963.

Helms testified that while the delivery of a poison pen to AM/LASH was not part of an assassination plot, he believed Castro's assassination was within the scope of the CIA's authority. As in the case of the 1962 plots, Helms based his belief on the vigor of the Administration's policy toward Cuba and his perception that there were no limits on the means that could be used in the effort against Castro. (Helms, 9/11/75, pp. 11-12) When asked whether it was his opinion that the offer of the poison pen to AM/LASH was authorized because it came within the scope of the 1963 program against Castro, Helms responded:

I think the only way I know how to answer that is that I do not recall when things got cranked up in 1963 any dramatic changes or limitations being put on this operation. There was still an effort being made by whatever device, and perhaps slightly differently oriented at this time, to try to get rid of Castro * * * But I do not recall specific things being said now, [we are not] going to do this, we're not going to do that, and we're not going to do the other things, and we will do just these things. (Helms, 9/11/75, 11-12)

Each Kennedy Administration official who testified on AM/LASH agreed that he had never been informed about any assassination plot and that he knew of no order to assassinate Castro. Their statements

¹ The following exchange occurred in Helms' testimony.

Sen. HART of Michigan. Dealing with respect to what? A change in government, or assassination?

Mr. HELMS. A change in government, Senator Hart. This is what we were trying to do." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 132.)

² As discussed above (see pp. 88), there was conflicting testimony from CIA officers concerning whether or not they viewed AM/LASH as an assassin and the purpose for giving him the poison pen. The documentary evidence, however, indicates that in 1963 AM/LASH was intent on assassinating Castro, that the CIA officers knew this, and that in addition to offering him a poison pen, the officers told AM/LASH they would supply him with high powered rifles with telescopic sights.

Helms testified that because AM/LASH "was the asset we were looking for, [we didn't] want him to blow himself or blow anything else by getting involved in something like this [assassination] and have it fail. We wanted him to stay in place." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 131) Helms stated that "at no time was it the idea of [the AM/LASH] case officers, or those people in the chain behind, to use [AM/LASH] to assassinate Castro." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 135)

Helms further stated: " * * * there was an enormous amount of temporizing with this fellow to keep him on the team, to keep him working away at this job, but to try and persuade him that this was not the way to go about it." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 133.) Helms testified that AM/LASH was given the poison pen "because he was insisting on something and this was a temporizing gesture rather than giving him some kind of a gun he had asked for * * *." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 133)

are consistent with Helms' testimony that he did not know that the AM/LASH operation involved assassination, but they again disagreed with Helms' view that an assassination plot could be undertaken without express authority. Running against the possibility that Administration officials intended an assassination of Castro was testimony that it was inconceivable that the President would have approved an assassination at the same time that he had authorized talks to explore the possibility of improved relations with Castro.¹

(3) THE QUESTION OF AUTHORIZATION IN THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

a. Summary of the Assassination Activity

The CIA delivered arms to AM/LASH in Cuba in March and June of 1964. Early in 1965, after AM/LASH had become more insistent that Castro's assassination was necessary and had asked for a silenced weapon, the Agency put AM/LASH in contact with the leader of an anti-Castro group, "B-1," with the intention that AM/LASH obtain his desired weapon from that group. The Agency subsequently learned that AM/LASH had received a silencer and other special equipment from B-1 and was preparing to assassinate Castro.

b. The Issue of Authorization

The issue of authority in the Johnson Administration is similar to that in the Kennedy Administration. The principal officials of the Kennedy Administration² (and DDP Helms) continued in their positions during the relevant period of the Johnson Administration (Robert Kennedy left the Administration in September 1964). Helms testified that he believed Castro's assassination was within the scope of the CIA's authority in view of Administration policy toward Cuba reflected in the AM/LASH operation in both 1963 and 1964-65. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 137-138) Again, there was no direct evidence that McCone or anyone outside the Agency authorized or knew about the AM/LASH plot.

The Committee examined four events that may shed light on the perceptions of the Administration and CIA officials about assassination during the early years of the Johnson Administration: (1) the covert action program against Cuba in 1964-1965; (2) the Special Group's action in investigating reports of Cuban exiles/underworld plots to assassinate Castro; (3) Helms' report to Rusk that CIA was not involved with AM/LASH in a Castro assassination plot; and (4) Helms' briefing of President Johnson on the 1967 Inspector General's Report on alleged CIA assassination plots.

¹ Rusk testified that "I find it extraordinarily difficult to believe" and that "I just can't conceive" President Kennedy would have authorized the passage of an assassination device for use against Castro while Atwood was exploring the possibility of normalizing relations with Castro. (Rusk, 7/10/75, pp. 85-86) Similarly, Bundy testified he "absolutely" did not believe President Kennedy would have authorized or permitted an assassination device to have been passed at the same time a possible rapprochement with Castro was being pursued. (Bundy, 7/11/75, pp. 150-151.)

On the other hand, when the possibility of exploring better relations with Castro was initially raised (but before any talks were begun) Bundy indicated that accommodation could be explored on a "separate track" while other proposed actions, such as sabotage, were going on. (Agenda for Special Group meeting of 4/29/63, p. 2)

² Rusk (Secretary of State), McNamara (Secretary of Defense), McCone (Director of Central Intelligence), and Bundy (Special Assistant for National Security and Chairman of the Special Group).

c. The Covert Action Program Against Cuba in 1964-1965

According to the minutes of a Special Group meeting on April 7, 1964, President Johnson decided to discontinue the use of CIA-controlled sabotage raids against Cuba.¹ (Memorandum of Special Group Meeting, 4/7/64) A McCone memorandum indicated that in reaching that decision, President Johnson had abandoned the objective of Castro's overthrow.

At the April 7 meeting, Rusk opposed sabotage raids because they were unproductive and had a "high noise level" that called attention to them. Rusk added he suspected the "Cuban exiles who actually conduct the raids of possibly wishing to leave fingerprints pointing to U.S. involvement in order to increase that involvement." (*Id.*, p. 2) McCone disagreed noting that the covert action program relied on a "well-planned series of sabotage efforts. Bundy said that since the June 1963 approval of the current sabotage program "policy makers * * * had turned sabotage operations on and off to such an extent that [the sabotage program] simply does not, in the nature of things, appear feasible." (*Id.*, p. 2)²

d. The Special Group Investigation of Reported Castro Assassination Plots by Cuban Exiles

On June 10, 1964, Helms sent McCone a memorandum stating that Agency officials had learned of several plots by Cuban exiles to assassinate Castro and other Cuban leaders. (Memorandum, Helms to McCone, 6/10/64) According to the memorandum, several of the plots involved "people apparently associated with the Mafia" who had been offered \$150,000 by Cuban exiles to accomplish the deed. Helms' memorandum stated that the sources of the reports were parties to the plots who had presumably given this information to CIA officials with the expectation that they would receive legal immunity if the plots succeeded. (*Id.*)

Helms' memorandum, however, did not mention any of the CIA assassination plots against Castro.³ To the contrary, it stated that "Agency officers made clear to each of the sources that the United

¹ A memorandum by Bundy on April 7, 1964, listed seven aspects of the covert action program which had been in effect. These were: (1) collection of intelligence; (2) covert propaganda to encourage low risk forms of active and passive resistance; (3) cooperation with other agencies in economic denial (4) attempts to identify and establish contact with potential dissident elements inside Cuba; (5) indirect economic sabotage; (6) CIA-controlled sabotage raiding; and (7) autonomous operations. (Memorandum for the Record of the Special Group, 4/7/64)

² In a memorandum the day after President Johnson's decision to stop CIA-controlled sabotage operations, McCone stated: "the real issue to be considered at the meeting and by the President was a question of whether we wished to implement the policy (outlined in certain memoranda) or abandon the basic objective of bringing about the liquidation of the Castro Communist entourage and the elimination of Communist presence in Cuba and thus rely on future events of an undisclosed nature which might accomplish this objective". (Memorandum by McCone, 4/8/64)

³ In the context of the Special Group's discussion, McCone's use of the words "liquidation" and "elimination" appears to be another example of inartful language. A literal interpretation of these words leaves one with the impression that assassination was contemplated. But the context of the discussion does not bear out such an interpretation. Thus in specifying what he meant by "future events of an undisclosed nature" McCone pointed to "extreme economic distress caused by a sharp drop in sugar prices," and "other external factors." (*Id.*, p. 8) McCone testified that such references as the "elimination" or "liquidation" of the Castro regime may not refer to assassination. (McCone, 6/6/75, p. 32)

⁴ Moreover, according to Bundy, no one informed him at the meetings that "In earlier years there had been a relationship with * * * persons allegedly involved with the criminal syndicate—in order to accomplish the assassination of Fidel Castro." (Bundy, 7/11/75, p. 71)

States Government would not, under any circumstances, condone the planned actions." (*Id.*, p. 1)

McCone said in a Special Group Meeting on June 18, 1964, that he was "somewhat skeptical" and opposed additional investigation, but "others, including Mr. Bundy, felt that the United States was being put on notice and should do everything in its power to ascertain promptly the veracity of the reports and then undertake prevention." (Memorandum of Special Group Meeting, 6/18/64) McCone made a Memorandum of the June 18 meeting which indicated that he had dissented from the Special Group's decision. He had expressed his belief that the Special Group was "overly exercised," and that he was inclined to dismiss the matter as "Miami cocktail party talk." McCone noted, however, that the Special Group "was more concerned than I and therefore planning to discuss the subject with the Attorney General and possibly Mr. Hoover." (Memorandum, 6/18/64, p. 1)

The Special Group decided to transmit the reports to the Attorney General "as a matter of law enforcement," and when Robert Kennedy was so informed a few days later, he stated that the Justice Department would investigate. (Memorandum of Meeting, 6/22/64) The FBI then conducted an investigation and its results were submitted by McCone to the Special Group on August 19, 1964.¹ (McCone to Bundy Memorandum, 8/19/64)

e. Helms' Report to Rusk

In 1966 Helms sent a memorandum to Rusk reporting the CIA's relations with AM/LASH. The memorandum stated that the CIA's contact with AM/LASH was for "the express purpose" of intelligence collection. (*Id.*) Noting allegations that had come to his attention that AM/LASH had been involved with the CIA in a Castro assassination plot, Helms stated:

The Agency was not involved with [AM/LASH] in a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro. * * * nor did it ever encourage him to attempt such an act.

Helms' memorandum made no mention of the fact that CIA officers, with Helms' knowledge, had offered a poison pen to AM/LASH on November 22 1963, that the CIA had supplied arms to AM/LASH in 1964, or that the CIA had put AM/LASH in touch with B-1 to obtain a silenced weapon to assassinate Castro.

Helms told the Committee that this memorandum to Rusk was "inaccurate" and not factual. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 115)

The CIA's copy of the memorandum contains a typed notation recommending that Helms sign the document. That notation was by Thomas Karamessines, who had become DDP. (Rusk, 7/10/75, p. 2) Helms testified that the day before his June 13, 1975, testimony to the Committee he had asked Karamessines why the memorandum to Rusk had been written in the way that it was. Helms stated he and Karamessines had concluded that they did not know the reason but Helms speculated that "it may be until we conducted the Inspector General's Investigation somewhat later we didn't have the facts straight, or

¹ McCone's memorandum summarized seven FBI reports on its investigation. The FBI said that several of the persons interviewed stated they had knowledge of the exiles' plot and had reported the information to the CIA. Others interviewed denied knowledge of the plans.

maybe we had the facts straight then but we did not have them straight later." (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 115)

f. Helms' Briefing of President Johnson on the 1967 Inspector General's Report

Drew Pearson's newspaper article in the spring of 1967 alleging United States involvement in plots to assassinate Fidel Castro prompted President Johnson to direct Helms, who was then DCI, to conduct an investigation. The result was the Inspector General's Report of May 23, 1967. (Helms, 6/13/75, pp. 35-36) After receiving the Report, Helms briefed the President "orally about the contents." (*Id.*, p. 36.) During his testimony, Helms was shown his handwritten notes which appeared to have been made in preparation for his briefing of the President. Those notes carried the story of CIA's involvement in assassination through mid-1963. When asked if he had told President Johnson that the Inspector General had concluded that efforts to assassinate Fidel Castro had continued into Johnson's presidency, Helms replied, "I just can't answer that, I just don't know. I can't recall having done so." (*Id.*, p. 38.) He did note that it would not have occurred to him to brief President Johnson on the 1964 AM/LASH gun deliveries because "I don't think one would have approached the AM/LASH thing as an assassination plot against Castro." (*Id.*, p. 39)¹

(4) Helms' Testimony on Authorization in the Johnson Administration.

Helms was asked if the Agency regarded "whatever marching orders they had obtained prior to the death of President Kennedy as still being valid and operative" when President Johnson succeeded to the office. Helms replied:

This is not very clear to me at this stage. A lot of the same officers were serving President Johnson as they served President Kennedy, and * * * I can't recall anymore whether there was any specific issue about whether this was taken up with President Johnson at any meeting or any session. If it had been, I would have thought there would have been records someplace. (Helms, 6/13/75, p. 139.)

Helms testified that with respect to the AM/LASH operation in the period 1964-1965, he had no knowledge or recollection that assassination was involved in the CIA's relationship with him. (Helms, 9/11/75, pp. 20-21) Helms said: "[t]he policy making and policy approval mechanism in President Johnson's Administration has to have gone through some changes in shifts I don't remember exactly what they were." (*Id.*, p. 22)

So if these things [placing AM/LASH in contact with a Cuban exile leader who would supply him with an assassination device] were happening after President Kennedy was assassinated, I don't know what authorization they're working on or what their thought processes were, whether these were simply low level fellows scheming and so forth, on something that didn't have high level approval. I honestly cannot help you. I don't recall these things going on at the time. (*Id.*)

When asked whether President Johnson had been informed of or had authorized continuing efforts to assassinate Castro, Helms replied:

¹ Helms earlier testified that AMLASH was an intelligence and political action agent. The Inspector General Report, however, treated the AMLASH operation as an assassination plot.

The Special Group would have continued to consider these matters, and I would have assumed that whoever was chairing the Special Group would have in turn reported to the President, which was the usual practice. (*Id.*)¹

The records of the Special Group do not show any consideration of Castro's assassination or of the AM/LASH plot during the Johnson Administration (or earlier) and there was no other evidence that McCone or anyone above the Agency was informed of or specifically authorized the AM/LASH plots.

¹ In an interview with Leo Janis in 1971, former President Johnson was reported to have said that when he had taken office, he had discovered that "we had been operating a damned Murder, Inc., in the Caribbean." (L. Janis, *"The Last Days of the President," Atlantic*, July 1973, pp. 35, 39, Janis was interviewed by the Committee staff and affirmed the accuracy of this remark.) The Committee has not ascertained who related this statement to Johnson. It should be noted that Johnson attended post-Trujillo assassination meetings which assessed United States involvement in that killing. His reference to Murder, Inc., may have derived from his knowledge of that episode or from general knowledge he had of other violent covert activities conducted during the Kennedy Administration.